The Impact Self-Graphing has on the Writing Fluency and Writing Attitudes of Three 3rd Grade Students with Special Needs

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The Impact Self-Graphing has on the Writing Fluency and Writing Attitudes of Three 3rd Grade Students with Special Needs

by
Julie Anne Hyatt
August 2013

A thesis submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development of the State University of New York College at Brockport, State University of New York in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education
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Julie Anne Hyatt

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Abstract

With the demands of the Common Core Standards, a large emphasis has been placed on writing in all content areas. Unfortunately, in regards to students with special needs, teachers are unsure how to instruct them to produce higher quality writing and increase writing fluency. This study was designed to explore the impact self-graphing has on the writing fluency and writing attitudes of three third grade male students with special needs. Each student was given a survey to determine his or her attitude towards writing and asked to write about a prompt for varying amounts of time for six weeks. The students maintained personal graphs that displayed the number of words they had written during each instructional period. Additional data were collected through observations. The results indicated that self-graphing directly impacts students’ writing fluency, students may need to be provided with concrete prompts that are of high interest, some students may need additional time to process prompts given and engage in a conversation about the writing task; despite attitude, writing is a process and takes time, and when students with special needs are given a supportive writing environment, they may develop positive attitudes about writing that can lead to improved written communication. Recommendations for future research include investigating the affect self-graphing has on students’ quality of writing, the impact self-graphing has on students’ writing fluency when a set amount of time is given, and the impact of student choice on high interest writing topics.
For Elizabeth Sullivan Murphy, my grandmother and fellow teacher of thirty years.

Your passion and love for our family will continue to amaze me. Thank you for encouraging me to be the teacher and student I am today.

For Jared, Dad, and Mom. Thank you so much for believing in me and supporting me through all of life’s exciting moments!
Chapter 1: Introduction

As I entered my fifth year of teaching, I made a personal goal to improve my writing instruction. As a third grade special education teacher, I spent a great deal of time working in a classroom with many reluctant writers. To accomplish my goal, I decided to focus my attention on three students with special needs. These students could often be seen seeking a great deal of guidance and support during their independent writing time, becoming frustrated and refusing to continue writing, and lacking confidence in their writing skills. In addition, these students needed a great deal of support completing their writing tasks. Their writing pieces were often unfinished due to the amount of time it required them to complete it. I asked myself, how can I help these students build confidence in themselves as writers and produce writing independently and with minimal support? So, my search began for a new and exciting writing strategy that would not only help my students improve their writing fluency, but also improve their writing attitudes.

Problem Statement

With the new demands of the Common Core Standards, a large emphasis has been placed on writing in all content areas. Unfortunately, in regards to children with special needs, teachers are unsure how to instruct them to produce higher quality writing and increase writing fluency.

In 2011, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) administered the first ever computer-based writing assessment to 24,100 eighth-graders and 28,100 twelfth-graders. This assessment was designed to evaluate students’ ability to effectively communicate in situations similar to those that they
would encounter within the workforce as well as academically. These students were asked to respond in writing to several different audiences and for several different purposes. The NAEP’s new assessment found that only 24% of the sampled eighth- and twelfth-graders were able to write at a proficient level, demonstrating that they were able to use writing as an effective form of communication. On the other hand, 54% of the sampled eighth-graders and 52% of twelfth-graders were able to write at the basic level. The basic level of writing reflects the students “partial mastery of the prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at each grade” (NAEP, 2011). The results of this assessment clearly demonstrate a need to identify an effective intervention to improve students’ writing skills.

Li and Hamel’s (2003) literature review investigated several examples of literature published from 1990 to 2000. The literature focused on college students with learning disabilities (LD) and the difficulties they experienced with writing. Li and Hamel found that college students with LD experienced a great deal of difficulty in the prewriting stage. During the prewriting stage, students felt that they did not have the necessary information to put down on paper or did not know how to organize their ideas into a cohesive piece of writing. When students are engaged in the writing process, often the words they write come far more slowly than the words they speak (Moxley & Lutz, 1995). Stotz, Itoi, Konrad and Alber-Morgan (2007) state, “Students who are not able to write fluently are likely to experience difficulty achieving success in the classroom...” (pg. 1). To assist students in achieving academic success within the classroom, teachers must continue to provide students with ample opportunities to develop their writing skills. Through the use of
freewrites and self-graphing, teachers can assist students in making writing experiences less awkward and more productive.

**Significance of the Problem**

Writing and increasing student motivation and engagement toward writing is an important component in literacy, although it is not viewed as a current hot topic (Cassidy, Montalvo-Valadez, Garrett & Barrera, 2010). During the writing process, students with special needs often experience difficulty with three writing goals. These are basic writing ability and fluency, informant status, and thinking and organizing strategies. Although the above stated writing goals are essential to writing, students with special needs are often more focused on the lower level skills, such as handwriting and spelling. Students with special needs spend much of their time focusing on if they used correct letter formation, spelling usage and punctuation instead of what they are trying to convey to their reader. This focus on lower level skills results in shorter, less polished writing pieces. Students’ writing pieces often do not include a clear message, lack organization and do not achieve a cohesive finished product. The implementation of freewrites and graphing the number of words that were written can provide students with a visual representation of the progress they have made and then in turn improve student writing performance (Stotz et al., 2007). It is essential to assist students with special needs in their ability to develop a written piece of work that not only is organized but also conveys a message to the reader. When the mention of writing is made, these students immediately disengage and feel as though they are not able to develop a piece of work that they are proud to show others.
This study is important because it may provide information regarding an effective writing approach to improve writing fluency in students with special needs. Without such research, teachers of students with special needs will continue to search without direction for ways to engage and motivate their students in the writing process. In addition, special needs students will continue to feel frustrated while engaged in the writing process, therefore causing them to give up or not put forth their best effort to demonstrate their knowledge through writing.

Purpose

The purpose of my study is to explore the impact self-graphing has on the writing fluency and writing attitudes of three third grade students with special needs. My goal is to use this information to determine if the self-graphing of freewrites effectively engages students in the writing process more independently. My study is designed to investigate the strategy of self-graphing the number of words written after completing a freewrite in order to increase writing fluency, therefore increasing the quality of writing produced by students with special needs. My hope is to identify an effective strategy to use not only with students with special needs, but also reluctant writers. Thus, my research questions are:

- What impact can self-graphing have on the writing fluency of 3rd grade students with special needs?
- What impact can self-graphing have on the writing attitudes of students with special needs?
Study Approach

In order to explore the impact self-graphing has on the writing fluency and writing attitudes of three third grade students with special needs, I selected three of my students to research. These students all possessed varying strengths and needs in the area of writing. In addition, they each possessed very different attitudes towards conducting the writing process. Through this selection, I was able to note the impact self-graphing has on students’ writing fluency as well as their individual attitudes about themselves as writers. The data collection method provided me with tools that allowed me to determine how each student views themselves as a writer, before and after the data collection, the number of words each student wrote after each instructional session, as well as the students’ reactions towards the writing prompt given during each instructional session.

I used three different forms of data collection for my research. At the beginning of the study, I provided my students with the Writing Attitude Survey developed by Kear, Coffman, McKenna and Ambrosio (2000) that assessed their attitude about themselves as writers. Through the use of this survey, I convert their percentages to raw scores and compared their scores to those of their age and grade peers (Kear, et al., 2000). This survey was also administered at the end of the data collection and any growth or changes in each students’ attitude towards writing was documented and analyzed.

During each instructional session, the students were provided with a writing prompt. These prompts began with pictures, to act as a visual aid, as well as a written prompt. As the instructional period continued, the visual aids were removed and the
students were only provided with a verbal writing prompt. These writing prompts were designed based on situations I felt the students could relate to or had some familiarity with. I began by providing my students with fictional prompts that promoted their creativity and used familiar humor. The students were then instructed to write for an increasing period of time, beginning with a three minute interval, increasing by one minute every two weeks, ending at a five minute period of time. Any observable changes in the students’ attitudes or behavior was documented and monitored.

I also collected a significant amount of data through the graphs the students maintained. These graphs were used to record the number of words the students wrote during each instructional period. They also recorded the time in which the students were given to respond to the writing prompt. In addition, these graphs were used to develop a group graph that noted significant gains that the group had made. At the end of each session, the students totaled the number of words they have written during the allotted time period. The number of words was then plotted on their individual graphs. In addition, the total group words written were plotted on a larger graph that was displayed within the classroom.

The last form of data collection was through the use of observational notes. These notes included the daily prompt that the students were asked to write about, any changes that had been made to the intervention as well as any other significant findings during each session.
Rationale

As a special education teacher, I often struggled to motivate my students with special needs to provide quality writing within a structured amount of time. I often felt as though I was providing them with the language they needed to complete the writing task instead of empowering them to record their own ideas through writing. Many times my student expressed that they did not know what to write about, but after a discussion with them, they were able to provide me with a significant amount of information. Through the implementation of freewrites that were conducted within a short time period, I was hopeful that I would decrease the stress my students felt when asked them to write about a particular topic. This decrease in the stress my students felt towards the writing process, I hoped would transfer to their academic success as well as their performance on the state Common Core Assessments. In addition, through the use of self-graphing, which allowed my students to graph the number of words they had written during a structured amount of time, I hoped would motivate them to continue their progress towards providing quality writing pieces.

Definition of Terms


Learning Disability (LD) – a diagnosis given when student achievements are not proportionate to their academic abilities (Smith, et al., 2006).

Literacy – Communication with others through listening, viewing, following, and reading directions and interacting with friends and colleagues.
**Summary**

Being a special education teacher working within a third grade blended classroom, I was often frustrated in the lack of motivation and engagement my students had towards writing. They viewed the writing process as very labor intensive and lacked confidence in their ability to provide information to a reader through written form. I wished to take a closer look at using freewrites and self-graphing to increase student motivation and engagement towards writing, as well as increasing student independent writing fluency.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Much research exists on the importance of writing instruction, yet there is far less research on how to engage students in the writing process. Cass (2010) outlined the importance of high-quality writing instruction and discussed numerous strategies to assist in providing this instruction to students with special needs. Li and Hammel’s (2003) synthesis of literature from 1990 to 2000 focused on the needs and difficulties college age students with disabilities face while engaged in the writing process. Baker, Chard, Ketterlin-Geller, Apichatabutra and Doabler (2009) discussed the importance of writing for success in all academic areas. In addition, they investigated the consequences of poor writing instruction and the negative impact it has on students’ writing success in the future. Elbow (2004) investigated the theory of putting writing instruction before reading instruction. Elbow’s rationale for this theory is that students are better able to read words they have written rather than being introduced to new words through their own reading. The new and outdated trends in literacy education were discussed and researched in depth by Cassidy et al. (2010). Tunks (2010) researched the change that occurs in fifth grade students’ attitude towards writing before and after test preparation for a state-mandated writing exam. Graham, Berninger, and Abbott (2012) found that elementary students’ attitudes towards writing and reading are separable constructs and their attitudes towards writing and reading can be significantly different depending upon their experiences, successes, and difficulties. Kear et al (2000) developed an instructional tool that can be used to determine students’ attitude towards writing. This instrument then can be used to develop instruction to meet all students’ areas of engagement
towards writing. Stotz et al. (2008) conducted a study investigating the effect of self-graphing on written expression of fourth grade students with high-incidence disabilities. Moxley (2007) investigated the topic of graphing and the implications for improving classroom instruction. Kasper-Ferguson and Moxley (2002) researched self-graphing after a brief freewrite and the effect is has on increasing students’ writing fluency. Moxley and Lutz’s (1995) research focused on the self-recording word counts of freewrites and their consideration as a way to engage more students in the writing process.

This literature review will outline some of the important studies in the following areas: the importance of writing instruction, the impacts of state and federal mandates on writing instruction, students’ attitudes and motivation towards writing and self-graphing and increasing writing fluency. This section will describe the research on which this study is built and also reveal gaps, which this study is designed to help fill.

The Importance of Writing Instruction

Increasing students’ writing ability can have a large impact on the academic success of students as an increased demand has been placed on writing in all content areas. Within Cass’ (2010) practitioner-based reflection, he states “students must develop as proficient writers, able to express what they know if they are to be successful at the middle/ high school level and beyond” (p. 59). In addition, a student must demonstrate his/her ability to simultaneously use cognitive, linguistic, affective, visual-motor and self-regulatory systems when developing a written piece. This diverse skill set is something that many students have not yet developed by middle
school. They will then be confronted with the challenge of writing in multiple genres across multiple content areas. With this increase in expectations, Cass states that many children will “experience cognitive overload, and fail” (p.60). In addition, students with learning disabilities tend to produce writing that lacks organization, is shorter in length and does not contain the necessary content. In order to assist these children, Cass states that students must be provided with high-quality instruction, with a direct focus on composition strategies to assist in developing the skills necessary for written expression.

Li and Hamel (2003) conducted a review of literature publish in 1990 to 2000 that focused on students with learning disabilities and the difficulties they experienced in writing. Through their synthesis, they found that many college students find the most difficult part of writing was during the prewriting stage. This stage is the most difficult because most students are not aware of the information they currently possess and have difficulty retrieving that information in a timely manner. One method that was used to assist students in quickly recording their thoughts and ideas was through the use of freewrites. Their purpose was to document important information that could be retrieved for later use. Li and Hamel emphasize that to ensure academic success for students with learning disabilities, faculty members and educators must be provided with direct instruction on how to assist these students with their writing development needs.

Through Baker et al. (2009) five experimental and quasi-experimental studies and 16 single-subject studies, they found that more than any other academic subject area, writing allows students to both express themselves as well as display their
knowledge of different content areas. In order to become an effective writer, one must be able to organize the information and his or her ideas, properly use all of the writing conventions, write legibly, and write in a way that will engage readers. They state that in the past, educators thought of writing instruction in a passive light and encouraged students to study the writing of others and mirror their own writing to resemble that of the authors they studied. Baker et al. feel as though this instructional approach is one that does not help students become better writers, but rather helps them learn to mimic others’ writing.

Within Elbow’s (2004) article, he argues that a concept or topic can better be understood if it is written before read. He uses the analogy of the horse and a cart, should writing be the horse pulling reading or reading coming before writing. Elbow makes the statement that the more one writes and talks, the more one has to write and say. In addition, when a student is reading, it is as if he or she is simply consuming the language written, but when they are writing they are choosing the words to create a message that displays their understanding. “Students invariably read better if they write first” (p. 12). Elbow believes that in order for a student to become a successfully reader, they must first become a masterful writer, thus the importance of teaching our students how to display their knowledge through written form.

After a review of the National Commission on Writing, Baker et al. (2009) found that a “majority of public and private employers state that writing proficiency is critical in the workplace and directly influences their hiring and promotion decisions” (p. 304). This research states that students entering higher education and/or the workforce must have the ability to communicate through the written
language. Writing is no longer seen as a necessity for just professionals but is a necessity for nearly all living-wage occupations.

**The Impacts of State and Federal Mandates on Writing Instruction**

With the demands of the Common Core State Standards, an increased emphasis has been placed on writing in all content areas. This increased demand has placed a tremendous amount of pressure on educators as well as students to display their content knowledge through writing. In 2011, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) administered the first ever computer-based writing assessment to 24,100 eight-graders and 28,100 twelfth-graders. This assessment was designed to assess student’s ability to effectively communicate in situations similar to those that they would encounter within the workforce as well as academically. These students were asked to respond in writing to several different audiences and for several different purposes. The NAEP’s new assessment found that 24% of the sampled eighth and twelfth-graders were able to write at a proficient level, demonstrating that they are able to use writing as an effective form of communication. On the other hand, 54% of the sampled eight-graders and 52% of twelfth-graders were able to write at the basic level. The basic level of writing reflects the students “partial mastery of the prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at each grade” (NAEP, 2011, p. 2). The results of this assessment clearly demonstrate a need to identify an effective intervention to improve students’ writing skills.

Stotz et al.’s (2008) research sought to investigate the effects of self-graphing on the quality and quantity of writing for three ten-year-old fourth grade students with
high-incidence disabilities. They found that if students were unable to write fluently, they would experience a great deal of difficulty within their academic career. They stressed that in order to assist these students, educators must provide effective interventions to improve students’ writing skills. Li and Hamel (2003) also stated that more and more students with learning disabilities are entering college unable to maintain the necessary writing requirements for academic courses. This is a problem as these students are also encountering educators that are unaware of how to assist these students and meet their writing needs. They stated that this is an issue that many are aware of, but there is limited research on the area of composition, which is based on the success or failure of college aged students with learning disabilities.

Cassidy et al.’s (2010) research investigated literacy areas that are currently “hot” and those that are “not.” Each topic’s current popularity was found by interviewing twenty-five literacy leaders, either in person or on the phone. These leaders were asked to rate each topic as “hot or not” and if they felt as though a topic was no longer “hot” but should be it was noted as well. In the area of critical reading and writing, it was determined that this topic was no longer “hot” at this time, although at least 75% of the respondents agreed that it should be. After analyzing the results of this study, the current “hot” trends in literacy do not line up with the federal and state mandates for increased writing proficiency. It would seem as though critical reading and writing are necessary for academic success and most of the literacy leaders feel as though it is not receiving the recognition it should at this time.
Students’ Attitudes and Motivation Towards Writing

The ability to communicate through the written language is one skill that is necessary for success academically as well as within the working world. Ones attitude on writing and writing instruction has a direct influence on how he or she approaches and engages in the process (Tunks, 2010). Graham et al. (2012) define attitude as “a learned predisposition to respond to a given object” (p. 53).

Cassidy et al. (2010) sought to investigate topics that are currently being discussed in depth within the literacy world. These topics were analyzed as being at the forefront of literacy education or placed in the foreground at this time. One area that was evaluated by twenty-five literacy leaders as being a topic that is not presently a hot topic was motivation and engagement. From all of the above research mentioned about writing motivation and engagement, a significant difference was noted. Although, writing motivation and engagement was seen as not a current “hot” topic, it was viewed by at least seventy-five percent of the literacy leaders as one that should be. This topic of motivation and engagement was view in 2005 as a “hot” topic, but from then on it has not been viewed as one. It was stated within their research that although motivation and engagement is not viewed as a hot topic at this time, it is at the heart of why programmatic initiatives are failing. It was said that students have many opportunities to gain information through different modes other than through texts. As teachers, we must assist students in reengaging in these texts to retrieve necessary information and then represent their understanding through writing.
Kear et al. (2000) sought to develop an instrument that could be used to assist teachers and educators in their ability to learn about students’ attitudes towards writing, which could then be compared to their age and grade equivalent peers. This instrument titled The Writing Attitude Survey has the students select from four different Garfield characters, all of which represent a different emotion. These emotions are very happy, which is scored a four, to very sad, which is scored a one. Once this survey is administered to students, the raw scores can then be converted to a percentile rank. This percentile can then be used to assist in planning instruction. If a teacher suspects a low attitude score, the teacher should investigate further to determine the specific areas. If poor attitudes seemed to be based upon limited encounters with a variety of writing, the teacher should seek to provide more opportunities for those students. This survey can be used not only as an initial indicator of students’ attitudes towards writing, but also as a pre and post-assessment. This survey can also be used as a way to monitor the impact a new writing program has on students’ writing attitudes.

Kear et al. (2000) state that as students progress through their academic careers, their attitude towards writing often declines. This decline in positive attitudes about writing will often continue unless interventions are put in place. “Effective teaching strategies and engaging opportunities to write successfully can make real inroads in student perspectives” (p. 5). Kear et al. firmly believe that through the use of the Writing Attitude Survey, teachers can monitor students’ growth as they strive to instill internal motivation about writing.
Tunks (2010) quantitative research investigated the impact state mandated writing assessment preparation had on the writing attitudes of 215 fifth-grade students from two different schools. Data were collected through the use of a pretest and posttest design method. The pre and posttest given was the Writing Attitude Survey developed by Kear et al. (2000) in order to provide a quantitative estimate of students’ attitude towards the writing process. The two schools chosen for the study had similarities in their student populations, socioeconomic and geographic status as well as gender makeup. In addition, all fifth-grade teachers from both schools had prior experience teaching fifth-grade, were all tenured faculty members and all devoted similar amounts of time to teaching writing. In addition, the instructional time spent on writing instruction increased for all educators as the state mandated assessment approached.

After the administration of the pretest, overall females within both schools had a more positive attitude about themselves as writers compared to the male students. This pretest was given at the beginning of the school year, before the preparation for the state writing assessment began. After completing the preparations and taking the state mandated writing exam, both girls and boys experienced less favorable attitudes toward writing. Tunks (2010) concludes “when preparation can include increasing writing skills with an emphasis on improving attitudes toward writing, students are more likely to take part in writing activities voluntarily and for their own enjoyment and use” (p.7).

Graham et al. (2012) took a triangulated approach as they researched whether attitude toward writing is a separable construct from attitude toward reading. For
their study, the participants were 128 first-grade and 113 third-grade students attending schools within a district in the northwest. At the beginning of the study each student completed a survey that assessed his or her attitude toward writing and reading. This survey consisted of 24 questions that all started with the statement “how do you feel…” The students were then prompted to circle four different pictures of Garfield, the cartoon cat, representing their feeling of that particular question. This survey was adapted from the Elementary Writing Attitude Scale by Kear et al. (2000). In addition to the survey, the students wrote personal narratives about a specific event that occurred within his or her life. This narrative was assessed based on the number of words written, correct word sequence, and overall quality of the composition.

After a very thorough analysis of the data, Graham et al. (2012) concluded that elementary children do develop attitudes about writing that are separable from their attitudes about reading. It was noted that teachers must reinforce and support students’ positive attitudes in order to foster a greater motivation towards their academic strengths. In addition, for students whose attitudes are negative towards reading and/or writing, it is crucial to determine the cause of the negative attitude and lack of motivation towards their literacy development. Graham et al. state that this negative attitude towards reading and writing “can range from not having the reading and writing skills needed to be successful to being in a reading or writing program that is viewed by the child as uninteresting, boring, too easy, or all of these” (p. 66). Teachers must be mindful of this negativity towards writing or reading and focus on making their instruction more engaging and beneficial for these students.
Self-Graphing and Increasing Writing Fluency

As writing can be seen as a difficult task which is necessary for success within the workforce, I feel compelled to identifying a strategy or several strategies to address this need to increase writing fluency. Stotz et al. (2008) state that as teachers in order to assist students in improving their writing, teachers much provide students with feedback. In order to provide this feedback, teachers must ensure that students produce writing. One strategy to assist in increasing students’ writing production is through the use of self-graphing (Stotz et al., 2008). “The purpose of self-graphing is to increase production, which is a prerequisite to improving writing quality” (Stotz et al., p. 186).

Moxley’s (2007) article was written as an introduction to graphing. This article was written to inform classroom teachers of the benefit of graphing toward student academic success. One way in which Moxley states graphing could be utilized within the classroom is to assess student performance and revise instruction to increase his or her success. Graphing not only show changes that occur in learning, but also the changes that occur between the time the pre and post assessments are administered. He states that the practice of graphing could easily be utilized at every grade level and in every content area. “Graphs can inform teachers if a modification in instruction is followed by improvements in the indicators for student performance” (Moxley, p.112).

Moxley (2007) states that graphing can be used to inform students on how well they are doing or how well they understood the expectations that were given to them. Another strength of graphing is that a teacher does not need to have the same goal for
every student. These individual graphs can be used to quickly see how each student is performing at their particular instructional area of need. Moxley also states that in addition to the student individual graphs, teachers should construct a class graph that records averages all of the students that would be displayed within a central location of the classroom. “Visual displays in graphic form make patterns conspicuous and allow inferences to be drawn more easily than a table allows. Graphs prompt relationships to be seen which would never be noticed in lists or tables” (Moxley, p.123).

Stotz et al.’s (2008) research sought to investigate the effects of self-graphing on the quality and quantity of writing for three ten-year-old fourth grade students with high-incidence disabilities. Stotz et al. were interested in determining the relationship between the self-graphing of words written in a response to a timed story started and the correct number of word sequences. This study was conducted in a kindergarten through fourth grade charter school within an urban area in Ohio. All of these students exhibited poor writing skills and all required extra writing support within the classroom.

Through the use of randomly drawn index cards, all of which contained a story starter, the students were asked to write about the topic for a particular amount of time. After the conclusion of the freewrite, the samples were scored for the total number of words written and the correct number of word sequences. Immediately following the freewrite, each student then met with the interventionist to review his or her results. After the students had returned to their class, the interventionist then graphed each student’s results on their individual graphs. At the conclusion of this
study, Stotz et al. (2008) found that “upon introduction of the self-graphing intervention, an increase was observed for each student’s total words written as well as the number of correct word sequences” (Stotz et al., p.181). In conclusion, Stotz et al. found a functional relationship between self-graphing and writing quantity and quality for fourth grade students with learning disabilities.

Kasper-Ferguson and Moxley’s (2002) year-long data-based case studies sought to investigate the results of student graphing of writing after brief freewrites of twenty fourth grade students, ages ranged from nine to ten year of age. Their primary focus was the impact this self-graphing had on students writing fluency. Kasper-Ferguson and Moxley state that an increase experiences with writing can be an indication and a means to improving the quality of writing. The one place in writing instruction where this can be easily done is during the pre-writing stage. During this stage students generate ideas without trying to focus on all of the other necessary elements of writing, such as correct punctuation, grammar, usage, organization, etc. “In writing quickly, the syntactic flow that results can be like night and day in comparison with some of the tortured expressions produced by more painstakingly labored writing” (Kasper-Ferguson and Moxley, p. 250).

For their research, Kasper-Ferguson and Moxley (2002) worked with twenty fourth-grade students within a general education classroom. The students were instructed to think about their particular topic for a short period of time. After that time the students were told to write about their topic for five minutes. Their focus would not be legible handwriting or correct spelling; it would be to write as many words about their topic as possibly within the five minute time period. At the
conclusion of the five minutes, the students counted the number of words they had written and recorded it on their papers. The students then graphed the total number of words they had written onto their own individual graphs that were located in their writing folders. In addition to their individual graphs, the students also had a class graph that was displayed within the classroom. Later in the data collection, the students were asked to begin proofreading their freewrites looking for spelling, grammar, and punctuation mistakes. In addition, the students also engaged in sharing these stories with their classmates. Throughout this entire process the teacher maintained a log, which recorded observational information about the students’ level of engagement and interest.

Kasper-Ferguson and Moxley’s (2002) study concluded that over the course of the school year the quality of writing within the writing samples improved. They noted that the improvement in writing fluency improved the students’ writing quality. These results were consistent with the previous research that was conducted within this area. One of the most significant results of their study was in the area of instructional changes that the teacher made until the writing rates improved. This teacher continually monitored his or her students’ progress and made the necessary instructional changes. Kasper-Ferguson and Moxley noted the changes in student writing quality, but placed all credit on self-graphing. They felt as though this was complementary to a teacher’s willingness to change his or her own instruction in order to see improvements within the students’ writing. “If this result generalizes, student graphing of writing rates may be a means of developing a teacher’s own
instructional package in this and other writing areas” (Kasper-Ferguson and Moxley, p. 262).

**Summary**

Engaging students in the writing process is crucial to increasing their writing performance not only on the state test exams, but also in preparation for their college careers as well as in the workforce (Cass, 2010). Writing allows students to both express themselves as well as display their knowledge in all content areas (Baker et al, 2009). Although writing is a crucial to students’ academic success, ones attitude towards writing and writing instruction has a direct influence on how he or she approaches and engages in the process (Tunks, 2010). In order to determine students’ attitude towards the writing process, Kear, Coffman, McKenna, and Ambrosio (2000) developed an instrument titled The Writing Attitude Survey. This survey can be used not only as an initial indicator of students’ attitude towards writing, but also as a pre and post-assessment. Kear, Coffman, McKenna, and Ambrosio firmly believe that through the use of the Writing Attitude Survey, teachers can monitor students’ growth as they strive to instill internal motivation about writing.

Although writing can be seen as a difficult task for students, Stotz et al. (2008) found that if students were unable to write fluently, they would experience an even great deal of difficulty within their academic career. Stotz et al. state that in order to assist these students, educators must be provide with effective interventions to use with their students. Moxley (2007) provided an introduction to the strategy of graphing and stated it many strengths. Graphing can be used to monitor students’ growth in a particular content area as well as show changes that occur in learning.
Through the use of graphing, teacher can quickly see students’ areas of strengths and needs.

Stotz et al. (2008) investigated the effect self-graphing would have on students’ in order to improve their writing fluency. Through the use of self-graphing, Stotz et al. and Kasper-Ferguson and Moxley (2002) conclude that students’ level of engagement as well as writing fluency increases. “Self-graphing provides the student with a picture of his or her performance and allows the student to easily compare current performance with pervasive performance” (Stotz et al., p. 173). Moxley and Lutz (1995) state that “children typically have far more opportunities to develop oral language than written language, and a primary responsibility of teacher is to arrange writing opportunities for students” (p.1). By providing students with numerous opportunities to engage in the writing process in an environment that encourages students to only focus on one aspect of the writing process at a time, can be seen to increase their engagement and motivation towards writing, thus improving student academic performance.
Chapter 3: Methods and Procedures

This study was designed to explore the effects graphing the number of words written during a timed freewrite has on writing of students with special needs. I also studied the impact of graphing on their attitudes about themselves as writers. In this chapter I discuss the participants, procedures and data collection I used. I also address how I analyzed the data I collected as well as the potential limitations of the study.

Research Questions

I planned my methods and procedures in an effort to answer the following questions:

- What impact can self-graphing have on the writing fluency of 3rd grade students with special needs?
- What impact can self-graphing have on the writing attitudes of students with special needs?

Participants and Context

School Context.

This study took place in a public school located in a rural community of western New York. The district is one of New York State’s high needs schools, based on low-socioeconomic guidelines. Less than fifty percent of the student population receives free or reduced lunches. Based on attendance documentation, the yearly attendance rate was ninety-five percent. Student ethnicities in the school were: seventy-eight percent White, seven percent Black or African American, three percent
Hispanic or Latino, two percent Asian/Pacific Islander, and less than one percent American Indian/Alaskan Native American.

After evaluating the NYS assessments given in the 2010-2011 academic year, we can better evaluate this school’s academic performance in comparison to other districts. Sixty percent of the third grade student population received a three or four on the ELA assessment and sixty percent of the third grade student population received a three or four on the math assessment. The state average for the ELA assessment was fifty-five percent receiving a three or four and the math state average was fifty-nine percent receiving a three or four on the given assessments.

**Classroom Context.**

This study took place in a third-grade blended classroom from the above-mentioned district. The classroom consisted of twenty-three students (eleven boys and twelve girls), one general education teacher, one special education teacher and one part time teacher’s assistant. The classroom population was very diverse, containing three students with an IEP and four Culturally and Linguistically Diverse students. The majority of the students came from lower-middle class backgrounds. Each day’s lessons were presented to the students using a co-teaching model as well as an intensive reading intervention in the resource room for all below-grade level readers.

The classroom teachers have access to the following tools and technology devices: four computer stations, Promethean Board, an Ipad and an ELMO projector. All the students with special needs spent an equal amount of time within the resource room with the special education teacher as well as within the general education
classroom. Within the resource room, the special education teacher had access to one computer station, six individual laptops, a Promethean Board, and an ELMO projector.

The classroom library consisted of texts ranging from first grade reading levels to sixth grade reading levels. The teachers also had access to the building’s book room and library, consisting of a variety of texts at a range of reading levels. The students had many opportunities to select texts from the classroom and school library daily.

**Reading Block.**

Students within this third grade classroom were exposed to a balanced literacy approach on a daily basis. They were engaged in forty minutes of shared reading, sixty minutes of guided reading, fifteen minutes of independent reading and twenty to thirty minutes of writing instruction. The Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention program was used with four of the below level readers on a daily basis. This intervention focused on decoding, fluency and writing skills by using texts that were at the students’ instructional levels. In addition to the intervention, the students were given weekly running records to monitor their reading and writing development.

During shared and guided reading, the Houghton Mifflin Reading program was used. This program provided a variety of reading skills, leveled guided reading texts, leveled comprehension activities as well as weekly grammar and structural analysis skills. During shared reading, the students were read third grade leveled texts that were read together in a whole group setting.
During guided reading, the students participated in a twenty-minute rotation where they met with the general education teacher. The students were placed into four different groups based on their individual reading levels. When meeting with the teacher, the students read instructional level texts. Through the use of a variety of strategies, students developed their comprehension and fluency of the texts read.

For the second guided reading rotation the students met with the teachers’ assistant. During this rotation the leveled groups participated in the rehearsal of a readers’ theater. The plays chosen were based on the students’ reading levels and vary depending on the students’ interests. Each group practiced their play for two to three weeks. After the necessary props were made, the groups presented their plays to the class. The goal of this guided reading rotation was to assist students in building their reading fluency while engaging in high interest texts.

The last two rotations the students were engaged in were independent reading and independent work. Any independent work assigned was used to reinforce skills presented during shared reading. These activities usually took a short amount of time, allowing the students the opportunity for additional independent reading time. During independent reading, the students read independent level texts. They were also asked to periodically respond to what they had read through a reading response journal. If additional time allowed each day, the teacher conducted a conference based on the students’ response in their journal. This conference was used to evaluate and assist students with their reading and writing development.
**Writing Block.**

During whole group writing instruction, the read mentor texts that were based on a particular unit of study. These texts were then critiqued based on their strengths and weaknesses. The students then developed a list of elements that were essential in developing a similar writing piece. For the individual development of the writing piece, the students worked within small groups. Within these small groups, the beginning steps of the writing process were broken down and the students were provided with teacher assistance when needed.

**Participants.**

This research involved three male special needs students within the above stated third grade-blended classroom; all possess Individual Education Plans (IEPs). I purposefully selected these three students to demonstrate a range of writing abilities, as well as varying strengths and needs in the area of writing. These similarities and differences were closely analyzed as well as the impact they had on the students’ writing fluency and personal attitudes about themselves as writers.

I sent a letter home to parents, to obtain their permission for their child to participate in this study. In addition, I also read to the students a statement of assent to confirm the assent of all participants. To ensure confidentiality, I refer to each participant using a pseudonym.

**Procedures of the Study**

This study was conducted over a period of six weeks, during January and February of 2013. I implemented this study two days per week, for fifteen to twenty minutes each day.
I first administered the Writing Attitude Survey (WAS) (Kear et al., 2000) to the three students as a group (See Appendix A). When the surveys were completed, I scored the results using the Writing Attitude Survey Scoring Sheet (See Appendix B). Then, two days each week for six weeks, the three students were given a writing prompt in which they wrote about for three minutes, at the beginning of the data collection period, increasing to five minutes. During this period of time, the students were encouraged to focus their attention on answering the prompt given, not the quality of their handwriting or their proper use of grammar or punctuation. While the students were engaged in the writing process, I took anecdotal notes to record the students’ behaviors, comments or questions on a self-created observation sheet (Appendix C). At the conclusion of the time given, the students counted the number of words they had written and graphed the number of words onto their own personal graphs (Appendix D). These graphs were used during each instructional period. In addition to the personal graphs, the students totaled the number of words the entire group wrote and graphed those results onto the group graph. This larger group graph was displayed in the classroom and referred to daily (Appendix D).

**Data Collection**

During the course of this study, I used three forms of data collection, as shown in the following sub-sections. The Writing Attitude Survey (Kear et al., 2000) was used to determine the participants’ attitudes towards writing. Thirteen observations were conducted during each of the instructional periods. Individual graphs were maintained representing the number of words written, and one group graph representing the number of words the group wrote collectively that day for six weeks.
These methods provide insight into the impact self-graphing has on the writing fluency and writing attitudes of 3rd grade students with special needs. Each instrument is discussed below.

**Beginning of Data Collection – Writing Attitude Survey (Kear et al., 2000).**

At the beginning of the study, I administered the *Writing Attitude Survey* (Kear et al., 2000) to the above stated three students. This survey assessed their attitude about themselves as writers. This survey was designed to provide teachers with an effective instrument to assess their students’ attitudes toward writing. With the valuable information this survey provided, teachers are then able to present instruction that targets specific areas of need. Kear et al.’s survey consists of 28 questions designed to evaluate a student’s attitude towards the writing process. Each question is paired with four Garfield cartoon characters that all exhibit a range of emotions from “very happy” (assigned a score of four points) to “very upset” (assigned a score of 1 point). The full-scale raw score for each student was found by adding the points scored for each question, with the highest possible total being one hundred-twelve points. Through the use of this survey, I then converted the percentages to raw scores and compare their scores to those of their age and grade peers, using the charts provided Kear et al.’s research report. This survey was also administered at the end of the six-week data collection and any growth or changes in each student’s attitude towards writing was documented and analyzed.
Weekly Instructional Sessions – Writing Prompts.

During each instructional session, the students were provided with a writing prompt. These prompts began with pictures, to act as a visual aid, as well as a written prompt. As the instructional period continued, the visual aids were removed and the students were only provided with a verbal writing prompt. These writing prompts were designed based on situations I felt the students could relate to or had some familiarity with. The students were then instructed to write for an increasing period of time, beginning with a three minute interval, increasing by one minute every two weeks, ending with a five minute period of time. Any observable changes in the students’ attitudes or behavior were monitored and documented on the Research Observation Recording Form (Appendix E).

Weekly Instructional Sessions – Graphing of Words Written.

At the end of each instructional session, the students totaled the number of words they had written during the allotted time period. The number of words they had written during that time was graphed on their own individual graphs. These graphs were used to record the growth they made during each instructional period. In addition, these graphs were used to develop a group graph that noted significant gains the group had made. This group graph was displayed within the classroom for all students to refer to on a daily basis.

Weekly Instructional Sessions – Observational Data.

The last form of data collection that I used was observational notes. Observations of the three participants were made two days each week throughout the six-week instructional period (Appendix E). Using multiple sheets of self-created
observations sheet, I took anecdotal notes that documented the daily prompt that the students were asked to write about, the amount of time given to complete the writing prompt, the beginning and ending time of the instructional period, any changes that have been made to the intervention (e.g., changes in time, elimination of the visual aid), each student's personal reaction to the daily prompt given, writing behaviors, teacher prompts that may have been given, and on and off task behaviors I saw each time I observed the students, as well as other significant observations during each instructional session.

Data Analysis

Using The Writing Attitude Survey (Kear et al., 2000), student maintained graphs, and observational data, I analyzed the data. This study used the following analytical frameworks to code patterns: attitude towards writing, student graphs displaying the number of words written during each instructional period, and observational notes taken during each instructional session. After coding the study’s data across the above-mentioned sources, I developed findings based on each source. To guarantee and ensure validity and reliability, this study observed the findings across all sources and domains as well as triangulated the findings. This method ensures that all sources of information are accounted for and are equally important.

Limitations

This study includes some limitations. It took place over a six-week period of time, and thus does not show any long-term impacts of the effects of self-graphing on students’ writing fluency and attitude about themselves as writers. Another limitation
was the small sample size. Therefore, the results were specific to the students selected for this study.

The data collection methods I have chosen also possess some limitations. The writing attitude survey provides both qualitative and quantitative data. It has provided a great deal of data on the students’ attitude towards writing as well as raw scores that can be used to compare students to their age and grade equivalent peers. This information has been helpful determining each student’s strengths and needs in the area of writing. The qualitative data, on the other hand, was less informative in the terms specific to implications for future teaching. This survey provided information based on each student’s attitude toward writing, but not on areas to assist in increasing the potential lack of motivation or engagement. Therefore, through the use of the writing attitude survey in addition to the observational notes, more specific information based on the students’ writing fluency and attitude about themselves as writers was analyzed, not just the beginning and conclusion of the data collection. This varying data collection may have represented itself as a limitation of this study and could have affected the reliability of the data.

Summary

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact self-graphing has on the writing fluency and writing attitudes of three male third grade students with special needs. The participants were purposefully selected to demonstrate a range of writing abilities, as well as varying strengths and needs in the area of writing. I collected my data through the use of The Writing Attitude Survey (Kear et al., 2000), student maintained graphs, and observational data. From this study, I wanted to identify a
strategy that would increase the writing fluency and writing attitudes of students with special needs. I also hoped to learn more about this topic and apply what I have learned towards improving my current teaching practices.
Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to explore the effect graphing the number of words written during a timed freewrite has on writing of students with special needs. I also studied the impact of graphing on their attitudes about themselves as writers. I investigated these research questions:

- What impact can self-graphing have on the writing fluency of 3rd grade students with special needs?
- What impact can self-graphing have on the writing attitudes of 3rd grade students with special needs?

To answer these questions, I administered the Writing Attitude Survey (WAS) (Kear et al., 2000) to the three male students as a group. Anthony, Brian and Todd (all names are pseudonyms) are all eight-year old, third-grade, students with special needs at a rural public school. When the surveys were completed, I scored the results using the Writing Attitude Survey Scoring Sheet. I also took anecdotal notes, on a self-created observation sheet, to record the students’ behaviors, comments or questions. Lastly, the students maintained individual graphs that represented the number of words they wrote during each instructional period. The group also maintained a group graph that represented the number of words the group wrote each instructional period. I began to analyze all the data I had collected at the conclusion of the study to reduce possible bias in my evaluation. A full description of the data collection instruments that were used is mentioned in chapter three.
Participants’ Overall Results

Kear et al.’s (2000) Writing Attitude survey consists of twenty-eight questions designed to evaluate a student’s attitude towards the writing process. According to Todd’s scores, he has slightly higher than indifferent attitude towards writing as shown in Figure 4.1. Anthony and Brian’s scores indicate that they have a less then indifferent attitude towards writing as compared to Todd.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Raw Score</th>
<th>Percentile (Mid-Year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anthony</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Todd</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* The raw scores indicate the sum of all points. Percentile indicates the percentage of other students that like writing less than these students do.

By converting the raw score to a percentile rank using Kear et al.’s (2000) conversion table, a formal approach to interpreting the scores can be obtained. It should be noted that Figure 4.1 provides a midyear percentile rank by grade and scale and this study was conducted during the midyear. Anthony’s percentile rank indicates that seventeen percent of other students are expected to like writing less than he does. Brian’s percentile rank indicates that thirteen percent like writing less than he does, and Todd’s percentile rank indicates that sixty-three percent like writing less than he does. Therefore, according to the Writing Attitude Survey (Kear et al.),
given at the beginning of the study, Todd enjoyed writing more than Anthony and Brian.

At the conclusion of the instructional period, the three third grade students were administered this survey again in order to identify changes in their attitudes towards writing (Kear et al., 2000, p.23). Through an informal approach, according to Anthony and Todd’s scores at the end of the instructional period, they have higher than indifferent attitude towards writing as shown in Table 2. Brian’s scores indicate that he has slightly higher than indifferent attitude towards writing as compared to Anthony and Todd.

By converting the raw score to a percentile rank using the table provided in the article by Kear et al. (2000), a formal approach to interpreting the scores could be obtained at the conclusion of the instructional period. After six weeks of instruction, Anthony’s scored a percentile rank of seventy-six, Brian sixty-three, and Todd ninety-one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Raw Score</th>
<th>Percentile (Mid-Year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anthony</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Todd</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The raw scores indicate the sum of all points. Percentile indicates the percentage of other students that like writing less than these students do.*
After analyzing the previously reported data, it is determined that after the six week instructional period all of the students’ raw scores increased, therefore each student’s attitude about himself as a writer improved.

**Observations.**

Observations of the three participants were made two days each week throughout the six-week instructional period. There will be more discussion regarding the observation results for each student in the section titled, Participants’ Results.

**Student and Group Graphs.**

At the conclusion of each instructional period, the students were asked to graph the number of words written that particular day. The graphs in the next section represent each writing prompt given, the amount of time given to complete the writing tasks and how each student performed that day. The y-axis number represents the number of words written during that instructional period.

During this first instructional period on December 14, 2012, the students were asked to write for three minutes about the following prompt, “Thinking about the first day of third grade. Describe what the first day was like. What did you see? How were you feeling? How did the day turn out, compared to how you thought it would?” The visual model used for this prompt was a picture of several school buses outside a school building. This prompt was chosen as the first prompt because it was felt that each of the students had experienced the first day of third grade and all had a great deal of background knowledge about the topic. In addition, this first prompt would be used as a baseline as an “easier” prompt that did not require a great deal of
creativity on the student’s part. Anthony wrote thirty-five words in the three-minute time frame, Brian wrote thirty-two words and Todd wrote sixteen words.

Figure 4.3. *This figure illustrates the data collected after the first writing prompt – three minutes were given to complete the writing task.*

(Prompt: “Thinking about the first day of third grade. Describe what the first day was like. What did you see? How were you feeling? How did the day turn out, compared to how you though it would go?”)

During this second instructional period on December 19, 2012, the students were asked to write for three minutes based on the following prompt, “You visit the zoo with your mother and as you walk past the bear exhibit you notice this young girl and this bear. Why is this girl in the cage with the bear? What is she doing in there with this bear?” The visual model used for this prompt was a picture of a young girl who had climbed on to the top of a bear’s head. This prompt was chosen as the second prompt due to the fact that it provided the students the opportunity to use their own creativity throughout the writing process. This prompt required a bit more abstract thinking, as the students were asked to write about a situation they most
likely had never encountered before. The data does show some inconsistency as with a more difficult writing prompt, Anthony increased the number of words he wrote from thirty-five the first instructional period to thirty-six words during the second. Todd remained consistent from the first instructional period to the second with sixteen words written during the three-minute time frame. Brian on the other hand decreased the number of words he wrote from thirty-two to thirty-one words.

![Bar chart showing the number of words written by students Anthony, Brian, and Todd.]

**Figure 4.4.** This figure illustrates the data collected after the second writing prompt — three minutes were given to complete the writing task.

(Prompt: “You visit the zoo with your mother and as you walk past the bear exhibit you notice this young girl and this bear. Why is this girl in the cage with the bear? What is she doing in there with this bear?”)

During this third instructional period on January 3, 2013, the students were asked to write for three minutes about the prompt, “Pretend you are a pumpkin on Halloween night. What do you see while everyone is trick or treating? How are you feeling? What happens to you as everyone turns off their lights and heads to bed?”

The visual model used for this prompt was a picture of a jack-o-lantern that was lit
from the inside by a candle. This prompt was chosen to encourage the students to take another point of view while they were writing. They were asked to write as an inanimate object (a pumpkin) would and the experience they would have on Halloween night. This prompt was much more difficult than any other writing the students had been asked to write about previous to this point in the academic year. The data shows that the students encountered a great deal of difficulty and the passages they wrote lacked organization, which clearly showed their confusion and diminished interested with the task. During the three-minute time period, Anthony was only able to write 9 words about the prompt given. Brian was able to write thirty-three words and Todd fourteen words based on the topic.

Figure 4.5. This figure illustrates the data collected after the third writing prompt - three minutes were given to complete the writing task. (Prompt: “Pretend you are a pumpkin on Halloween night. What do you see while everyone is trick or treating? How are you feeling? What happens to you as everyone turns off their lights and heads to bed?”)
On January 7, 2013 the amount of time the students were asked to write increased from three minutes to three and a half minutes. This change in time was to determine if the students were given more time to write about the given prompt, would there be a change in the number of words they were able to write. The prompt given was, “Describe your favorite Christmas gift.” The visual model used for this prompt was a picture of several gifts wrapped for Christmas. The students were immediately engaged in this topic and ready to begin the writing process very quickly. Anthony wrote forty words in the three and a half minutes given, Brian thirty-three words and Todd wrote fifteen words. The data shows there was a slight increase in the number of words written, but it cannot be determined if the change was due to the increase of time given or the prompt chosen.

![Figure 4.6](image-url)

*Figure 4.6. This figure illustrates the data collected after the forth writing prompt – three and a half minutes were given to complete the writing task.*

(Prompt: “Describe your favorite Christmas gift.”)

On January 8, 2013, the students were asked to write for three and a half minutes about the following prompt, “Imagine that it rained food for an entire day.
What kind of food would fall from the sky? What would you do with all of the food?” The visual model used for this prompt was a picture of a character from the *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* movie standing outside while donuts and meatballs fall from the sky. This topic was chosen in order to encourage each student to begin writing his own story about a strange day in his own life. The text *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* written by Judi Barrett was referenced here as a mentor text. The data clearly shows that this task was easier for some students than for others. Anthony was able to write forty-four words during the time given, Brian wrote thirty words and Todd wrote thirteen words. One can review this data and see that Brian and Todd both experienced difficulty in their ability to create a fictional story based on an odd day that may have occurred in their lives.

![Bar chart showing number of words written by Anthony, Brian, and Todd.](image)

*Figure 4.7. This figure illustrates the data collected after the first writing prompt – three and a half minutes were given to complete the writing task. (Prompt: “Imagine that it rained food for an entire day. What kind of food would fall from the sky? What would you do with all of the food?”)*
During the January 23 instructional period, the students responded to the prompt, “Imagine that you had a dinosaur in your backyard for an entire weekend. What would you weekend be like? What would you do with the dinosaur?” The visual model used for this prompt was a picture of a dinosaur. The data collected clearly shows that the students were able to write more about this topic than others in previous instructional periods. Anthony was able to write thirty-seven words in the three and a half minutes that were given to write, Brian wrote forty-five words and Todd wrote sixteen words. When looking closely at Brian and Todd’s word counts, during this instructional period they recorded more words than in any other previous instructional period. This topic allowed the students to become more creative throughout the writing process and use some of their background knowledge while writing.

Figure 4.8. This figure illustrates the data collected after the sixth writing prompt – three and a half minutes were given to complete the writing task. (Prompt: “Imagine that you had a dinosaur in your backyard for an entire weekend. What would you weekend be like? What would you do with the dinosaur?”)
During the January 24 instructional period, the students were given four minutes to respond to the following prompt, “What do you want to be when you grow up and why?” The visual model used for this prompt was a picture of a man dressed in a business suit. This topic is one that I have not discussed with the members of the group and I was interested in analyzing the responses that each student would give. When looking at the data, Todd wrote considerably more words in the given time than in previous prompts. He wrote twenty-three words; Anthony and Brian both wrote fewer words than in previous sessions. Anthony wrote thirty-four words and Brian wrote thirty-eight words. During this instructional period, the students were encouraged to provide examples as to why they would be good at their given profession of interest as well as why that profession interested them. It can be concluded that these additional steps to consider while writing may have affected the number of words that they were able to write in the given amount of time.

![Figure 4.9. This figure illustrates the data collected after the seventh writing prompt - four minutes were given to complete the writing task. (Prompt: “What do you want to be when you grow up and why?”)](image-url)
The students were given four minutes to respond to the prompt, “If you could be anything you wanted to be (animal, person, object, etc.), what would you be?” on January 29, 2013. The visual model used for this prompt was a picture of a car that looked as if it had human like features, such as eyes and a mouth. The data below clearly shows the students’ interest in this prompt. Anthony wrote fifty words, Brian wrote fifty-seven words, and Todd wrote twenty-eight words. This fictional prompt was one that required the students to think about an animal or object that they wanted to be and then provide reasons as to how being that animal or object would help them. This prompt was one that engaged the students, and therefore, resulted in a larger number of words written during the allotted time.

**Figure 4.10.** This figure illustrates the data collected after the eighth writing prompt - four minutes were given to complete the writing task. (Prompt: “If you could be anything you wanted to be (animal, person, object, etc.), what would you be?”)

The prompt the students were asked to respond to on January 30, 2013 was “Imagine that your teacher turned in to an animal. What type of animal would she
be? Would she act differently? If so, how would she act? What type of homework would she give?” The visual model used for this prompt was a picture of a turtle sitting behind a teacher’s desk. This prompt required the students to think about their teacher in a different light as well as determine what she would be like if she was an animal or object. The data shows that this task was more daunting for the students. Anthony wrote only twenty-nine words, Brian wrote sixty-one words, and Todd wrote twenty-one words. The data shows that Brian was able to write a considerably greater number of words than the other students about the topic, whereas the other students experienced a more difficult time.

![Figure 4.11](image)

*Figure 4.11. This figure illustrates the data collected after the ninth writing prompt - four minutes were given to complete the writing task.*

(Prompt: “Imagine that your teacher turned into an animal. What type of animal would she be? Would she act differently? If so, how would she act? What type of homework would she give?”)

On February 6, 2013 the students were given an increase in time from four minutes to four and a half minutes to respond to the following prompt, “By the end of third grade what is one thing you would like to improve upon. Why?” The visual
model used for this prompt was a picture of a young boy sitting behind a desk and holding a pencil. This prompt did not ask them to be creative in answering the questions, just to think about themselves as learners and determine one aspect that they would like to improve upon. The data collected shows that Anthony and Todd had a more difficult time expressing themselves. Anthony wrote twenty-nine words, Todd wrote twenty-one words, and Brain wrote fifty-seven words.

![Figure 4.12](image.png)

*Figure 4.12. This figure illustrates the data collected after the tenth writing prompt – four and a half minutes were given to complete the writing task. (Prompt: “By the end of third grade what is one thing you would like to improve upon. Why?”)*

On February 8, 2013 the students responded to the following prompt for four and a half minutes, “Imagine that you could have anything you wanted for lunch. What would your school lunch look like? What would the different foods be? Would you make the lunch menu the same for each day?” When this prompt was given, the visual aids that had been previously provided were removed. The visual aid was removed to investigate if the students continued to rely upon them or would be able to
script the ideas in their head. In addition, this prompt was chosen to see if the student would take a more persuasive approach to the writing process or simply provide answers to the given questions. Anthony was able to write fifty-three words, Brian wrote fifty-five words, and Todd wrote twenty-seven words. When looking at the data, it is difficult to determine if the slight increase in the number of words the students wrote is directly correlated to the removal of the visual aid or the topic of interest that was chosen.

![Bar chart showing the number of words written by Anthony, Brian, and Todd.]

*Figure 4.13. This figure illustrates the data collected after the eleventh writing prompt – four and a half minutes were given to complete the writing task. (Prompt: “Imagine that you could have anything you wanted for lunch. What would your school lunch look like? What would the different foods be? Would you make the lunch menu the same for each day?”)*

During the February 11, 2013 instructional period, the students wrote for five minutes about the following prompt, “Imagine that you were the principal of our school, what would you change about the school? Would you change the amount of time that we were in school? Would you change our lunches? How would your school be different than ours now?” This prompts provided the students the
opportunity to express their feelings about their current school. They were asked to express what they would like to change about their school to make it better suited for them as learners. Anthony wrote thirty-three words, Brian wrote seventy-six words, and Todd wrote twenty-five words. Brian’s increase in the number of words showed a clear topic sentence and multiple details why he wanted to change certain things about his school. His writing remained focused on the prompt given and allowed him the ability to write more about the topic.

![Bar graph showing the number of words written by Anthony, Brian, and Todd.]

*Figure 4.14. This figure illustrates the data collected after the twelfth writing prompt—five minutes were given to complete the writing task.

(Prompt: “Imagine that you were the principal of our school, what would you change about the school? Would you change the amount of time that we were in school? Would you change our lunches? How would your school be different than ours now?”)

For the last prompt on February 12, 2013, the students were asked to think about some things that they really want to have or to do if they had as much money as they needed. The prompt was “Imagine that you were given 1 million dollars. What would you do with all of that money? Would you buy gifts for your family members
or go on a vacation? What would you buy? Where would you go?” Their responses to this prompt were very well thought out and each student provided examples why having that much money would allow them to buy what they wanted. Anthony wrote thirty-seven words, Brian wrote seventy-four words, and Todd wrote thirty words about the given prompt for five minutes.

![Bar graph](image.png)

**Figure 4.15.** This figure illustrates the data collected after the thirteenth writing prompt—five minutes were given to complete the writing task.

(Prompt: “Imagine that you were given 1 million dollars. What would you do with all of that money? Would you buy gifts for your family members or go on a vacation? What would you buy? Where would you go?”)

The graph below is an illustration of the number of words the students wrote during each instructional period. This graph shows the trends and changes in the number of words each student recorded. As the instructional period continued, the number of words each student wrote also increased. This increase in the number of words can either be attributed to the increase in the amount of time that was given to write an appropriate answer to the given prompts, the confidence each student was gaining through the use of their self-maintained graphs, or the students’ interest level
towards the writing prompts. Each of these ideas will be analyzed further in the participants’ results sub-sections.

**Figure 4.16.** This figure illustrates the data collected throughout the entire data collection.

The graph below is an illustration of the number of words the students wrote collectively as a group during each instructional period. This graph was made to show the trends and changes in the number of words the students recorded as a group. This graph was a motivating factor for all the students. At the beginning of the instructional period, the students would comment on the number of words they wrote the previous day and would make a goal for themselves about how many words they were going to write that day. In addition, this graph was displayed in the classroom to act as a reflection to all of the group members’ hard work and improvement they were making. All of the above graphs are replicas of the graphs the students maintained throughout the instructional period. See appendix C for student maintained graphs.
Participants’ Results

This section discusses the analysis of student maintained graphs, observations, and Writing Attitude Survey (Kear et al., 2000) for each participant. Anthony’s first finding shows that when he participated in a conversation about the prompt given, he was able to better comprehend the task at hand and produce a higher quality writing piece. Secondly, the improvements in Anthony’s writing fluency had no correlation to the self-maintained bar graphs. Anthony did not find maintaining a bar graph that showed his writing growth to be motivating. He was, however, motivated by the prompts that were given. When Anthony was presented with a prompt that he had vast background knowledge in, his writing fluency and confidence in himself as a writer improved.

After an analysis of the student maintained graphs, observations and Writing Attitude Survey (Kear et al., 2000), Brian’s quality of writing was directly impacted by the additional think time he was provided with to organize his thoughts and ideas, as well as the conversation he had with his peers about the writing prompt given.
Secondly, by maintaining a bar graph that represented Brian’s writing performance, his writing fluency increased as well as his motivation towards the writing process. Lastly, significant changes in Brian’s writing attitude can be attributed to the additional think time he was presented with as well as the self-maintained bar graph.

After an analysis of the student maintained graphs, observations and Writing Attitude Survey (Kear et al., 2000), Todd’s quality of writing was directly impacted by the additional think time and conversations he had with his peers. This additional time assisted Todd in organizing his thoughts and ideas, as well as improved his writing fluency. Secondly, by maintaining a bar graph that represented Todd’s writing performance, his writing fluency increased as well as his motivation towards the writing process. Lastly, significant changes in Todd’s writing attitude can be attributed to the additional think time he was presented with as well as the self-maintained bar graph.

**Discussion of Anthony’s Findings.**

When Anthony participated in a conversation about the given prompt, he was able to better comprehend the task at hand and produce a higher quality writing piece. Secondly, the improvements in Anthony’s writing fluency are attributed to the motivating prompts he was given. Lastly, when Anthony was presented with prompts he felt he had a great deal of background knowledge in, his writing fluency and confidence in himself as a writer improved.

**Engaging in a conversation about the given prompt.**

Before beginning each timed writing session, Anthony benefited from the brief whole group discussion of his ideas before actually beginning the writing
process. The group discussion took place before the students started their timed writing. During this conversation, the students read the prompt aloud to each other and were asked a few questions. These questions consisted of: How would you start your writing piece? How would you answer this prompt? Through these conversations, Anthony was able to better organize his ideas, which resulted in him producing a higher quality writing piece. This improvement in his writing can be seen in the following two writing pieces. In figure 4.18, Anthony was unengaged in the conversation about the prompt and his writing showed his disinterest and was lacking organization. In figure 4.19, Anthony was engaged in a conversation about the prompt and his writing contains organization and remained focused on the prompt given.

Figure 4.18. Anthony’s Third Writing Piece.
(Interpretation: “skeleton zombie gushing babies witch ghosts firework clown ducking”)
Imagine that you were given 1 million dollars. What would you do with all of that money? Would you buy gifts for your family members or go on a vacation? What would you buy? Where would you go?

If I had 1 million dollars I would give people million dollars to move out of their houses and I would go get my family to move in the houses. Then it would be family street and that’s it!

When analyzing the data collected on January, 3, one can see how Anthony’s writing was affected by his lack of engagement in a conversation about the prompt.

At the start of the instructional period, the students read aloud the prompt, “Pretend you are a pumpkin on Halloween. What do you see while everyone is trick or treating? How are you feeling? What happens to you as everyone turns off their lights and heads to bed?” After the prompt was read aloud, it was noted that Anthony did not seem engaged in the task and even after encouragement, did not provide a great deal of input during the group’s conversation. He simply stated, “I think about going trick or treating?” This lack of input in the group’s conversation correlates with the decrease in Anthony’s writing performance. During the three minutes of writing time, Anthony wrote a total of nine words. These words were not written in a cohesive piece; he simply listed the costumes one would see while they were trick or treating.
When analyzing data collected on February 12, one can see the positive affect Anthony’s writing had when he engaged in a thorough conversation about the prompt. On this day, Anthony was asked to respond to the following prompt:

“Imagine that you were given 1 million dollars. What would you do with all of that money? Would you buy gifts for your family members or go on a vacation? What would you buy? Where would you go?” At the beginning of our instructional session, Anthony stated that he would like to take his family on vacation and they would travel on a big ship. He also stated, “No wait. I would give people money to move out of their houses so my whole family could live on the same road. It would be my family road.” Before beginning the writing process, Anthony had a very clear
idea of what he wanted to write about and was eager to begin. When looking closely at his bar graph, Anthony was only able to write thirty-seven words in the five minutes that was provided. Although the number of words he wrote was less than previous instructional sessions, the quality of his writing had drastically improved. His writing contained complete sentences that clearly conveyed the message he intended. Although his writing fluency did not improve, when he had finished writing this piece he was visibly proud and asked if he could share it with the group. Anthony’s increased writing performance is directly related to the depth in which he engaged in a conversation about the given writing task. An example of Anthony’s improved writing performance can be seen in figure 4.21.

![Image of Anthony's Last Writing Piece]

*(Figure 4.21. Anthony’s Last Writing Piece.*

(Interpretation: “If I had 1 million dollars I would give people million dollars to move out of their houses and I would go get my family to move in the houses. Then it would be family street and that’s it!”)

*Self–maintained bar graph was not motivating.*

After analyzing Anthony’s data, one can conclude that the changes in Anthony’s attitude towards writing were not directly impacted by the use of the self-maintained bar graphs. Unlike the other participants, at the beginning of each
instructional period, Anthony would quickly turn to the new writing prompt and begin reading it, while the other participants were looking at their graphs and having a conversation about the goals they had set for each other. In an observation made on January 3, while the other two participants stated that the group would have to write more than eighty-three words to beat their previous goal, Anthony began a conversation with me, stating that the prompt made him think of trick or treating and what he was thinking of dressing up as for Halloween this year. After each writing session, it was noted that Anthony quickly counted the number of words he had written and willingly colored in his graph. However, he did not express any excitement or comment on the number of words he had written. He was simply following the directions given to the group, but did not personally find the use of the self-maintain bar graphs to be motivating.

**Concrete writing prompts.**

Through the analysis of Anthony three data instruments, one can conclude that although the self-maintained bar graphs were not motivating for Anthony, the prompts in which were chosen for him were. The data shows that when Anthony was presented with a concrete writing prompt, he was able to provide the reader with more information about the topic as well as create a more cohesive piece.

During the first three instructional periods, Anthony was eager to begin his answer to each of the writing prompts given. He would quickly open his writing journal to take a peek at the new prompt for that day. In an observation made on January 3rd, Anthony stated that this prompt was hard for him to write about. This prompt asked the students to take the viewpoint of a pumpkin on Halloween and write
about what the pumpkin may have experienced on Halloween night. When looking at his self-maintained bar graph, it can clearly be seen that his lack of interest in the prompt given impacted his motivation towards the writing process, therefore affecting his writing fluency. He wrote nine words in the three minutes provided and the words written did not create a cohesive piece of writing. He simply listed the things that the pumpkin would have seen on Halloween night, such as a zombie and a ghost.

Figure 4.22. Anthony’s Third Writing Piece.
(Interpretation: “skeleton zombie gushing babies witch ghosts firework clown ducking”)

During an observation made on January 8, Anthony was exceptionally excited to begin writing about the prompt given. This prompt asked the students to pretend that it rained food for an entire day. They had to brainstorm what types of food would fall from the sky and determine what they would do with all of the food.
Anthony immediately stated that he had read a book like this before and that he wanted to get started right away. He was engaged the entire time and at the conclusion of the time given, he asked if he could have additional time to finish his story. Anthony’s excitement about this prompt can easily be seen in his writing fluency. He wrote forty-four words written in the three and a half minutes given. This was the most he had written thus far.

Figure 4.23. Anthony’s Fifth Writing Piece.
(Interpretation: “was about time food came falling down and came rain outside to get. food it was so great when you saw what you it will come I want to rain cone then it was dinner that day it never stop piling”)

According to Kear et al. (2000), a raw score near seventy on the Writing Attitude Survey means a student has an indifferent attitude towards writing. Since
Anthony had a raw score of sixty at the beginning of the instructional period and an eighty-three at the conclusion of the instructional period, it indicates that he has an improved attitude towards writing. The observations made throughout the instructional period revealed the changes in his attitude. These changes in his attitude can be linked to the success and motivation Anthony felt when he was presented with a writing prompt that he felt he had a great deal of background knowledge in. In addition, an improvement in Anthony’s writing fluency can be seen when he was given a prompt that gave him the opportunity to write about what he would like personally or had personally encountered before, rather than a prompt that encouraged him to use his imagination and to be creative. Therefore, for future instruction, when working with a student like Anthony, I will provide him or her with concrete writing prompts that will increase their writing fluency as well as their attitude about themselves as a writer.

**Discussion of Brian’s Findings.**

Brian’s quality of writing was directly impacted by the additional think time he was provided with to organize his thoughts and ideas, as well as the conversation he had with his peers about the writing prompt given. Secondly, by maintaining a bar graph that represented Brian’s writing performance, his writing fluency increased as well as his motivation towards the writing process. Lastly, significant changes in Brian’s writing attitude can be attributed to the additional think time he was presented with as well as the self-maintained bar graph.
Impact additional think time had on Brian’s writing.

Brian benefited a great deal on the think time that was given at the beginning of each instructional period. It was noted several times that he made comments such as, “Hmm, I am not sure what to write about.” or “I have never thought about that before.” During his think time, Brian was very focused and would announce to the group when he had an idea.

During an observation made on January 23, Brain was exceptionally excited to begin the writing prompt, “Imagine that you had a dinosaur in your backyard for an entire weekend. What would your weekend be like? What would you do with the dinosaur?” Immediately after the prompt was read aloud to the group, Brain stated, “hmmm, that would be really cool.” He then told the group that we would be like cave men riding dinosaurs around instead of driving cars. The group enjoyed this comment and I felt as though it helped the other members of the group paint a picture in their heads. During the timed writing portion of the instructional period, Brian stopped writing, looked at me and in a laughing voice said, “This is really funny. You are going to like reading this one.” This outward excitement was one that I had not previously seen from Brian. When looking at Brian’s completed writing, he started his piece with, “One day I woke up and there was a dino in my backyard and he wanted to stay for a 1 week.” He then proceeded to write about the conversation he and the dinosaur had about living in his backyard for a week. Although his writing did not contain the proper punctuation necessary to tell the reader that there was a conversation occurring between the two characters, he did lay the foundation for an interesting story. Once the three and a half minute writing time period was up, Brian
asked me if he would be able to continue working on his piece and he was very disappointed that he would not be given additional time. With additional time, I feel as though Brian would have been able to continue his story about the adventures, that he would embark upon with his brother, Luke, and the dinosaur. When looking at his personal graph, Brian beat the goal he set for himself and wrote forty-five words in three and a half minutes. This was the most he had written thus far.

Figure 4.24. Brian’s Sixth Writing Piece.
(Interpretation: “One day I woke up and there was a dino in my backyard and he wanted to stay for a week. So are you sure?” “Yes I do,” said the dino. “Well let’s have some fun.” “Come here Luke.” “Come on here you are!”

During an observation made on January 30th, Brian’s improved writing performance can directly be attributed to the amount of think time he was given before beginning the writing process. He was asked to imagine that his teacher was an
animal and determine what type of an animal she would be and how she would potentially act. On previous instructional periods, I gave the students one to two minutes to brainstorm how they would answer that day’s writing prompt. On this particular day, Brain asked for additional time and stated, “Hmm, I’m not sure” and “I don’t think of you as an animal, this is hard.” After the conclusion of the think time, the group then had a brief discussion about how they would begin their writing and what ideas they were going to write about. As each of the other two group members shared their ideas, Brian listened intently. After they were finished Brain gave the two other students suggestions such as, “You could write about Mrs. Hyatt being a bird or a butterfly.” Brain was not only able to develop his own idea for his writing, but also build upon other’s ideas and assist them in planning their writing.

At the conclusion of the five minutes given to write about his prompt, Brain read to the group what he had written. His writing started with a statement about what animal his teacher would be and then quickly moved into stating what she would do differently as a bird. Again, like previous prompts, Brain’s writing contained a conversation between two members of the story, but when one looks more closely at his writing the punctuation needed to differentiate between the dialogue was missing. His writing stayed on topic, but was missing transitions that would have assisted in the organization of his writing. After the conclusion of the instructional period, I decided to work one on one with Brian after the other students had left the group. Together we looked closely at that particular day’s writing and had a discussion on what we could have done to improve his writing. We focused that day on just identifying where one sentence started and one sentence ended. We added the
necessary end punctuation needed as well as corrected a few misspellings. On that particular day I had decided not to address the use of quotations to differentiate between the dialogue between the speakers. Brian seemed to be a bit overwhelmed and I did not want this instructional period to turn from one that he enjoyed to one that he was not proud. Therefore, for future teaching points, I would work with Brian on his ability to use quotations within his writing to maintain its organization.

*Figure 4.25. Brian’s Ninth Writing Piece.*
(Interpretation: “If my teacher was a bird we would not be having school for the winter and she would make us study worms for homework. Yay! No more math facts! Yes, up high. This is why I would want her to turn into a bird because no school for a long time. Yay! That’s going to be fun man, awesome!”)
Through the use of additional think time, significant changes can be seen in Brian’s writing. His writing became more organized as well as clearly conveyed an interesting story that the reader would enjoy.

**Impact self-maintained bar graph had on Brian’s writing fluency.**

Before beginning each writing session, Brian would look back to his past writings and note the number of words he wrote the previous instructional period. He would always comment on how many words he would have to write that particular day. In addition, each day he would refer to the group graph and let the other members of the group know how many words as a group they needed to write. There were very few times that he was outwardly excited about beginning the writing process, but I could tell that he had set a personal goal for himself as well as the group as to how many words they were going to write.

During an observation made on February 11, before the prompt was read aloud to the group, Brian commented that he had to write more than fifty-five words to beat his previous goal. In addition, he informed the other participants that in order to beat yesterday’s writing goal, they needed to write more than one hundred twenty-five words. The students were asked to imagine that they were the principal of the school and discuss what changes they would make to our school. After Brian was given five minutes to write about the given prompt, he counted up the number of words he had written and was outwardly excited because he beat his previous goal by writing seventy-six words. This was the most he had written thus far. In addition, he commented to the group that he was certain they would meet their group goal.
Through the use of the self-maintained bar graph, Brian was able to create daily goals for himself that motivated him to write more than he had the previous day. The bar graph not only motivated Brain each day; it also improved his writing fluency.

*Changes in Brian’s attitude towards writing.*

According to Kear et al. (2000), a raw score near seventy on the Writing Attitude Survey means a student has an indifferent attitude towards writing. Since Brian had a raw score of fifty-eight at the beginning of the instructional period and a seventy-eight at the conclusion of the instructional period, it indicates that he has a
higher than indifferent attitude towards writing. The observations made throughout the instructional period supported these changes in his attitude. Through the use of additional think time, the conversations Brian had with his peers and the self-maintained bar graph, Brian’s attitude about himself as a writer improved. Several times during the instructional periods, Brian made comments asking for additional writing time. This eagerness to continue writing was one that had not been seen during previous writing tasks. Not only did Brian’s attitude about himself as a writer improve, but the quality and organization of his writing also improved.

**Discussion of Todd’s Findings.**

Todd’s quality of writing was directly impacted by the additional think time and conversations he had with his peers. This additional time assisted Todd in organizing his thoughts and ideas, as well as improves his writing fluency. Secondly, by maintaining a bar graph that represented Todd’s writing performance, his writing fluency increased as well as his motivation towards the writing process. Lastly, significant changes in Todd’s writing attitude can be attributed to the additional think time he was presented with as well as the self-maintained bar graph.

**Impact additional think time had on Todd’s writing.**

During the beginning of each instructional period, it was noted that Todd was able to provide answers to the prompts verbally and with a lot of detail. When it came to writing these ideas on paper, he had a very difficult time. He would focus much of his energy on the proper formation of his letter, instead of focusing his energy on the writing response. This caused Todd a great deal of frustration and at
the conclusion of each time period, he was asking for additional time and stating that
he did not get to finish what he wanted to say.

During an observation made on December 14, Todd was very excited to begin
this new experience with the group and wanted to get started right away. He had
many questions about our graphs and stated, “I want each of my bars to reach the
top,” meaning that he would like to write thirty-six words each day. Before Todd
began writing about the given prompt, he stated that the buses in the picture look like
the buses we have at school and writing about the first day of school would be easy
for him. Throughout the writing period, Todd needed reminders to continue working,
instead of erasing each incorrectly written letter. He focused much of his energy on
the proper formation of his letters, rather than on what he had to say about the first
day of school. At the conclusion of the writing time period, Todd asked for
additional time and became upset because he did not have a finished piece of writing.
When looking at Todd’s graph, one can see that he was only able to write sixteen
words in the three minutes provided. The minimal number of words can be directly
correlated with his slower writing speed. Although Todd did not write a considerable
amount, what he wrote remained focused on the prompt and contained minimal errors
that would interfere with the readability of the piece.
During an observation conducted on January 24, Todd was asked to write about what he would like to be when he grows up. During our brief discussion, Todd had a great deal to add to our group discussion. He stated, “I want to be a racecar driver, pumper (pump gas at a gas station), or own my own restaurant. I would be a good race car driver because I race my brother on my bike and I always win.” Todd was again able to verbally state how he would respond to the prompt, but was only able to write twenty-three words in the four minute time period. When looking closely at his writing, it contained a very well written topic sentence and he started to provide one reason as to why he would be a great racecar driver. At the conclusion of the time period, even though his writing piece was not finished, Todd was very
excited that he beat his previous number of words by a large margin. He stated to the group, “Hey look, I wrote a lot. Our graph will be high today.”

![Image of Todd's Seventh Writing Piece]

Figure 4.28. Todd’s Seventh Writing Piece.
(Interpretation: “I would like to be a race car driver and this is why. I would be a great race car driver I would..”)

When looking closely at Todd’s writing fluency, one can see trends within his graph. Todd is able to write more about the prompt given when additional think time is provided. By providing Todd with additional time to plan and organize his writing before beginning the writing process, Todd was able display his thinking in a more thorough manner. In addition, when Todd is given this additional time the quality of his writing improves.

**Impact self-maintained bar graph had on Todd’s writing fluency.**

Before beginning each writing session, Todd would look at his graph and note the number of words he wrote the previous instructional period. He would then
comment on how many words he would have to write that particular day to beat the previous day’s goal. In addition, each day he would refer to the group graph and determine how many words the group would need to write that day to beat the number they wrote the prior day.

During an observation made on January 3, Todd commented to the group that he would only need to write seventeen words to beat the words he wrote the previous day. He also told the group that would only have to write more than eighty-three words to beat yesterday’s goal. These comments to the group showed Todd’s motivation towards the writing process. In addition, he asked if he could get started because he was ready to beat his goal. After the conclusion of the three minutes of writing time given, Todd was very disappointed in the fact that he did not meet his goal, as he wrote fourteen words. He stated that he would try a lot harder the next day and apologized to the group.

Figure 4.29. Todd’s Third Writing Piece. (Interpretation: “seeing people with sacks. Giving candy to the children. Me going out at night.”)
During an observation made on January 29, Todd commented to the group that he would only need to write more than twenty-three words to beat the number of words he wrote the previous day. After he made this comment he quickly read the passage aloud to the group and provided the group with a description to what his topic sentence would look like. The prompt asked the students if they could be anything (an animal, person, object, etc.) what would they be? Todd stated to the group, “I really like great cars. I would drive all over the world.” At the conclusion of the four minutes of writing time given, Todd counted the number of words he had written and announced to the group that he beat his goal and wrote twenty-eight words. Todd was very excited and proud of his writing performance. Although his writing was lacking details as to why he would want to be a car, his writing fluency had improved based on the goal he set for himself.

*Figure 4.30. Todd’s Eighth Writing Piece.*

(Interpretation: “If I could be a object, I would be a car and this is why. I like a lot of cool, cool, cool cars and very cool cars.”)
Changes in Todd’s attitude towards writing.

According to Kear et al. (2000), a raw score near seventy on the Writing Attitude Survey means a student has an indifferent attitude towards writing. Since Todd had a raw score of seventy-eight at the beginning of the instructional period and a ninety-two at the conclusion of the instructional period, it indicates that he has a higher than indifferent attitude towards writing. The observations made throughout the instructional period supported these changes in his attitude. Through the use of additional think time, the conversations Todd had with his peers and the self-maintained bar graph, Todd’s attitude about himself as a writer improved. Significant changes can be seen in Todd’s writing fluency. He did not experience a great deal of difficulty in his ability to verbally answer the prompt; his challenge was to get the ideas written in a restricted amount of time. It was noted that with additional writing time, Todd would be able to develop a more thorough piece.

Summary

Through the analysis the self-maintain graph, observations and Writing Attitude Survey (Kear et al., 2000), Anthony, Brian, and Todd all showed a slightly higher than indifferent attitude towards writing. At the conclusion of the instructional period, all of the students had a much better attitude about themselves as writers as well as about developing a written piece, as compared to the beginning of the instructional period. Anthony’s writing lacked organization and proper conventions, which made it very difficult to read and understand the message he wanted to convey. Within the time provided, Brian was able to write a great deal about each of the prompts, but his writing was lacking in proper conventions usage. On the other hand
Todd’s writing was very well written, but due to his writing speed he was not able to develop a thorough written piece in the amount of time provided.

Through the use of the self-graphing strategy, Brian and Todd’s writing fluency was directly impacted. Each instruction period, the two boys set goals about how many words they were going to write that day and did their best to reach these goals. On the other hand Anthony’s writing fluency was not directly impacted by the use of self-graphing. Anthony’s writing was directly impacted by the prompt that was given each day. By compiling the information collected for each student, conclusions have been made that will be discussed within the next chapter.
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

This study investigated how the writing fluency and writing attitudes of 3rd grade students with special needs was affected by self-graphing. In this chapter, I discuss the conclusions, the implications of my research, and I provide recommendations for future research. Based on the results, I develop four conclusions. First, self-graphing directly impacts some students’ writing fluency. Second, students like Anthony need to be provided with concrete prompts that are of high interest to the student, as well as possess a great deal of background knowledge in. Third, it is essential to provide students like Brian and Todd with additional time to process the prompt given and engage in a conversation about the writing task. Fourth, regardless of attitude, writing is a process and takes time. Fifth, when students with special needs are given a supportive writing environment, they may develop positive attitudes about writing that can lead to improved written communication. The implications of this study for my teaching include three teaching strategies: fostering a positive attitude towards writing by implementing the self-graphing strategy, providing students with prompts that are relevant to them and then to slowly provide prompts that encourage more complex thinking and writing, and engaging students in a conversation about the writing prompt before and after the writing has been completed. Finally, three recommendations for future research are discussed. These recommendations focus on the further investigation of the affect self-graphing has on students’ quality of writing, the impact self-graphing has on students’ writing fluency when a set amount of time is given, and the impact of student choice of what topic to write about.
Conclusions

First, self-graphing directly impacts some students’ writing fluency. The observations and the student maintained graph results indicate the participants’ writing fluency improvements as reported in chapter 4. At the beginning of each instructional period, Brian and Todd engaged in a conversation about the number of words they had written the previous day. They set goals for themselves as well as a group goal. At the conclusion of the writing time, Todd and Brain would refer back to their graphs and comment on whether they had reached the goals they had set for themselves. Todd and Brian were both motivated by the self-graphing strategy and referred back to their graphs before and after each instructional period. The results from this study agree with the results from Moxley’s (2007) study: “the teacher who goes as far as having students self-graph their performances can expect to see improved performances from the very fact that students are self-graphing them” (p.120). Through the use of the self graphing strategy, Todd increased the number of words he had written from five words per minute, to six words per minute. That is an increase of one word per minute. Anthony increased the number of words written per minute from eleven to twelve. Lastly, Brian increased the number of words he had written from ten to fifteen words per minute. This was an increase of five words per minute. Through the use of self-graphing, the students were able to track their own writing progress, which therefore motivated them to increase the number of words they had written the previous day.

Second, students like Anthony need to be provided with concrete prompts that are of high interest. This became apparent to me when I compared observational
notes on Anthony and Todd. During each instructional period, Todd’s excitement towards the writing process was evident. On the other hand, Anthony did not show interest or disinterest until after the writing prompt was read aloud to the group. When comparing his writing performance on December 14th and February 12th, the quality of writing he produced was very different. When analyzing Anthony’s December 14th writing piece, he was able to write thirty-five words within the three minutes given, although the words written lack organization and were very difficult to read. In addition, the quality of his writing is poor and did not clearly display a message that the reader could understand. As compared to the writing Anthony produced on February 12th, significant changes could be seen. Anthony responded to a prompt asking him what he would do with one million dollars. He wrote thirty-seven words during the five minutes he was given to respond to the prompt. Although there was not a drastic increase in Anthony’s writing fluency, the quality of his writing was drastically different. He wrote in complete sentences that made sense to the reader and clearly conveyed the message he intended. Although his writing fluency did not improve, when he had finished writing this piece he was visibly proud and asked if he could share it with the group. In a previous session, he was even reluctant to read it aloud to me.

When Anthony was presented with a prompt that directly impacted his life and he felt as though he possessed a great deal of background knowledge on the topic, for example how he would change his school lunches, his writing fluency improved and he was able to write fifty-three words in four and a half minutes. On the other hand, when Anthony was presented with a prompt that required his imagination and
he did not have a large amount of background knowledge on the topic, for example what animal his teacher would be, he only wrote twenty-nine words and the quality of his writing was poor. Therefore, when students like Anthony are presented with prompts that directly relate to his or her life and he or she feels as though they have the background knowledge to write about, his or her writing fluency is positively impacted.

Third students like Brian and Todd need additional time to process the prompt given as well as engage in a conversation about the prompt in order to jump-start their thinking and assist him or her in developing a more organized writing piece. This became apparent to me when I compared the observational notes on Brain and Todd and their Writing Attitude Survey (Kear et al., 2000). According to the survey, which asks students to respond to questions based on their interests, at the beginning of the instructional period, Brian and Todd both had an indifferent attitude towards writing. In addition, the observational notes conducted at the beginning of the instructional period, show that both students were only provided with a brief one to two minute discussion about the prompt given. Towards the end of the instructional period, the students were provided with additional time to process the prompt given and engage in a group discussion of the prompt. During this discussion, the students agreed upon a topic sentence that could be used to start their writing piece, ideas as to how to answer the prompt’s questions, and they all provided each other with examples of details they could include in their writing. At the end of the instructional period, after the final administration of the Writing Attitude Survey, both Brian and Todd’s attitude about themselves as writers improved. Therefore, through the use of a brief
discussion of the writing task at hand and additional think time before beginning the writing piece, students like Brian and Todd gain confidence in themselves as writers and in the task that is intended for them to complete. This confidence assisted them in completing more thorough writing pieces that they were proud of. Kear et al. state that, “Effective teaching strategies and engaging opportunities to write successfully can make real inroads to student perspectives” (p. 6).

The fourth conclusion is that writing is a process and takes time. It takes time to change students’ attitudes about themselves as writers as well as improve the writing they are currently producing. Kasper-Ferguson and Moxley (2002) state that in order to improve the quality of writing, students need increasingly more experiences with writing. In order to increase students’ writing experiences, students need to be engaged in the writing process and feel confident in their ability to take risks. When looking at the improvements Anthony, Brian and Todd made, one can attribute these improvements to their graphs as well as their attitude about themselves as writers. Each of the students stated at the beginning of the instructional period that they would not like to write about an event that occurred, but at the end of the instructional period, each student stated that they would be excited to write about an event that happened. This slight change in attitude and writing improvement happened over a six-week period of time. These improvements may not have been grade-level appropriate, but they were improvements that assisted in opening their eyes to the kind of writers they all are. Therefore, writing is a process and it does take time to change students’ views about themselves as writers.
Lastly, the fifth conclusion is when students with special needs are given a supportive writing environment, they may develop positive attitudes about writing that can lead to improved written communication. Kear et al. (2000) states that, “teachers face an uphill battle as they attempt to foster positive writing attitudes in their students. We believe this battle can be won” (p.6). One way to win this battle is to create an environment in which the students are encouraged to take risks with their writing, feel supported if they may not have succeeded the first time, and are also provided with direct instruction on how to improve their writing. Throughout this study, Anthony, Brian and Todd were all provided with a supportive learning environment and when analyzing the data collected by Writing Attitude Survey (Kear et al., 2000), each student’s attitude about himself as a writer improved. In addition, Anthony, Brian and Todd all experienced an increase in the number of words they were able to write throughout the six-week instructional period. In addition to an increase in the amount of time given to complete each writing prompt, Anthony increased eighteen words, Brain increased forty-four words, and Todd increased fourteen words. Therefore, when students with special needs are given a supportive writing environment, they may develop positive attitudes about writing that can also lead to improved written communication.

Implications

One implication for teaching is the need to foster a positive attitude towards the writing process by maintain individual and whole group graphs that represent the number of words written after a free write. Research shows that writing is a complex process and “a student must demonstrate dexterity in assimilating features from
cognitive, linguistic, affective, visual-motor, and self-regulatory systems” (Cass, 2011, p. 60) in order to develop the requisite skills necessary for writing development. In order to develop these necessary skills, students must foster a positive attitude towards the writing process at an early age. By implementing the self-graphing strategy into a teacher’s writing curriculum, teachers can assist in improving his or her students’ attitudes about themselves as writers. Moxley (2007) states that improved academic performance can be seen when a teacher takes an active role in assisting students in tracking their progress through the use of self-graphing. “The teacher who goes as far as to revise instructional treatments that are recorded on class graphs can expect to eventually find that some instructional treatments will have performance advantages over others” (Moxley, 2007, p.120).

A second implication for teaching is the need to provide prompts that students can easily relate to at the beginning of the instructional period. After some time, the teacher may provide less support to his or her students, and provide prompts that encourage students to think outside of the box and use more of their own creativity. Kasper-Ferguson and Moxley’s (2002) research also followed this similar support structure in order to foster the students’ passion for writing, instead of providing prompts that were too difficult right away. By structuring the prompts given to the students, to move from very relatable prompts to more difficult and thought provoking prompts, the teacher can ensure that he or she is assisting in building the students’ confidence in themselves as writers.

The third implication for teaching has to do with engaging reluctant writers in a conversation about a writing task before beginning the writing process as well as
after the conclusion of the writing process. By engaging the students in this conversation before beginning the writing process, teachers can assist students in developing ideas to write about, organize their writing, remind students of the proper writing conventions as well as ask any questions at the time that may have caused some anxiety or uncertainty while writing. In addition, by engaging students in a conversation at the conclusion of the writing process, teachers have the ability to make that time a time to edit and revise the writing that was produced and compliment the student on the quality of their writing. Stotz et al. (2008) state “in order to provide feedback, students need to be able to produce writing” (p. 184). By having these conversations with students, teachers will also be developing a positive environment that his or her students feel comfortable in and willing to take risks with their writing.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The results of this study revealed that self-graphing did affect the writing fluency and writing attitudes of three 3rd grade students with special needs. The following recommendations are based on the results from this study:

- Further investigate the affect self-graphing has on students’ writing quality. This study focused on determining the effectiveness of the self-graphing strategy on students’ writing fluency, but did not further analyze the students’ use of proper writing conventions while graphing the number of words that were written after a free-write.

- Further investigate the affect self-graphing has on students’ writing fluency when given a set amount of time to answer a given prompt. This study
focused on determining the affect self-graphing had on students’ writing fluency with an increasing amount of time to conduct the writing process. The students were given three minutes at the beginning of the instructional period, which increased to five minutes. The increasing amount of time may have had an impact on the increasing number of words the students were able to write.

- Further investigate the affect that choosing a writing topic has on students’ writing fluency. This study provided the students with a prompt each day to write about. By providing the students with the ability to choose their own topic, would students’ writing attitudes and fluency improve?

**Summary**

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact self-graphing has on the writing fluency and writing attitudes of three 3rd grade students with special needs. The data collected from this study led me to conclude that self-graphing directly impacts students writing fluency. Students like Anthony need to be provided with concrete prompts that are of high interest and it is essential to provide students like Brian and Todd with additional time to process the prompt given and engage in a conversation about the writing task. Writing is a process and takes time. When students with special needs are given a supportive writing environment, they may develop positive attitudes about writing that can lead to improved written communication. The following implications were also found as a result of this study. There is the need to foster a positive attitude towards writing by implementing the self-graphing strategy, provide students with prompts that they are relatable to them
and then slowly provide prompts that encourage more complex thinking and writing. Engage students in a conversation about the writing prompt before and after the writing process is complete. Finally, further research is needed on the affect self-graphing has on students’ quality of writing, the impact self-graphing has on students’ writing fluency when a set amount of time is given, and the impact of student choice regarding topics on students’ writing fluency.

As a current 3rd grade special education teacher who witnesses reluctant writers, I became interested in exploring the self-graphing strategy and its impact on my students. Through this investigation, I have learned more about this topic and will be able to apply what I learned toward improving my current teaching practices.
References


Appendix A

Writing Attitude Survey
Directions for use

The Writing Attitude Survey provides a quick indication of student attitudes toward writing. It consists of 28 items and can be administered to an entire classroom in about 20 minutes. Each item presents a brief, simply-worded statement about writing, followed by four pictures of Garfield. Each pose is designed to depict a different emotional state, ranging from very positive to very negative.

Administration

Begin by telling students that you wish to find out how they feel about writing. Emphasize that this is not a test and that there are no right answers. Encourage sincerity.

Distribute the survey forms and, if you wish to monitor the attitudes of specific students, ask them to write their names in the space at the top. Hold up a copy of the survey so that the students can see the first page. Point to the picture of Garfield at the far left of the first item. Ask the students to look at this same picture on their own survey form. Discuss with them the mood Garfield seems to be in (very happy). Then move to the next picture and again discuss Garfield’s mood (this time, somewhat happy). In the same way, move to the third and fourth pictures and talk about Garfield’s moods—somewhat upset and very upset.

Explain that the survey contains some statements about writing and that the students should think about how they feel about each statement. They should then circle the picture of Garfield that is closest to their own feelings. (Emphasize that the students should respond according to their own feelings, not as Garfield might respond!) In the first and second grades read each item aloud slowly and distinctly, then read it a second time while students are thinking. Be sure to read the item number and to remind students of page numbers when new pages are reached.

In Grades 3 and above, monitor students while they are completing this survey. It is not necessary for the teacher to read the items aloud to students, unless the teacher feels it is necessary for newer or struggling readers.

Teachers should review the items prior to the administration of the survey to identify any words students may need defined to eliminate misunderstanding during completion of the instrument.

Scoring

To score the survey, count four points for each leftmost (very happy) Garfield circled, three points for the next Garfield to the right (somewhat happy), two points lor the next Garfield to the right (somewhat upset), and one point for the rightmost Garfield (very upset). The individual scores for each question should be totaled to reach a raw score.

Interpretation

The scores should first be recorded on the scoring sheet. The scores can be interpreted in two ways. An informal approach would be to look at where the raw score falls related to the total possible points of 112. If the raw score is approximately 70, the score would fall midway between the somewhat happy and somewhat upset Garfields, indicating the student has an indifferent attitude toward writing. The formal approach involves converting the raw score to a percentile rank by using Table 1. The raw score should be found on the left-hand side of the table and matched to the percentile rank in the appropriate grade-level column.

Elementary Writing Attitude Survey

Name ____________________ Grade _______ School ____________________________

Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

1. How would you feel writing a letter to the author of a book you read?
   - Picture 1
   - Picture 2
   - Picture 3
   - Picture 4

2. How would you feel if you wrote about something you have heard or seen?
   - Picture 1
   - Picture 2
   - Picture 3
   - Picture 4

3. How do you feel writing a letter to a store asking about something you might buy there?
   - Picture 1
   - Picture 2
   - Picture 3
   - Picture 4

4. How would you feel telling in writing why something happened?
   - Picture 1
   - Picture 2
   - Picture 3
   - Picture 4

Page 1

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Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

9. How do you feel if you were an author who writes books?

10. How do you feel if you had a job as a writer for a newspaper?

11. How do you feel about becoming an even better writer than you already are?

12. How do you feel about writing a story instead of doing homework?

Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

13. How do you feel about writing a story instead of watching TV?

14. How would you feel writing about something you did in science?

15. How would you feel writing about something you did in social studies?

16. How do you feel if you could write more in school?

Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

17. How do you feel about writing down the important things your teacher says about a new topic?

18. How do you feel writing a long story or report in school?

19. How do you feel writing answers to questions in science or social studies?

20. How do you feel if your teacher asked you to go back and change some of your writing?

Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

21. How do you feel if your classmates talked about making your writing better?

22. How would you feel writing an advertisement for something people can buy?

23. How do you feel keeping a journal for class?

24. How do you feel writing about things that have happened in your life?

Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

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25. How do you feel about writing about something from another person's point of view?

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26. How do you feel about checking your writing to make sure the words you have written are spelled correctly?

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27. How do you feel if your classmates read something you wrote?

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28. How do you feel if you didn’t write as much in school?

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Appendix B

**Elementary Writing Attitude Survey Scoring Sheet**

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<tr>
<th>Student Name</th>
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<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Administration Date</th>
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**Scoring Guide**

- 4 points  Happy Garfield
- 3 points  Slightly smiling Garfield
- 2 points  Mildly upset Garfield
- 1 point   Very upset Garfield

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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Score</th>
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Full scale raw score.......................

Percentile rank............................

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Appendix C

**Research Observation Recording Form**

Date: _______________  Beginning Time: _____ Ending Time: _____

Writing Prompt: ____________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

Amount of Time Given to Complete the Writing Prompt: ____________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Observations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student A:</td>
<td>✤</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student B:</td>
<td>✤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student C:</td>
<td>✤</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Total Number of Words Written by the Group: _____ Words
Appendix D

Anthony’s Graph
Brian’s Graph
### Todd’s Graph

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>1</th>
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</table>

**Question:** How many words did you write today?
Our Group Graph

Whole Group Graph
Appendix E

Research Observation Recording Form

Date: December 14, 2012  Beginning Time: 11:55  Ending Time: 12:15

Writing Prompt: Think about the 1st day of 3rd grade. Describe what that first day was like. What did you see? How were you feeling? How did the day turn out, compared to how you thought it would go?

Amount of Time Given to Complete the Writing Prompt: 3 minutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Student A: | ❖ Eager to begin  
❖ Handwriting neater than usual  
❖ 35 words written |
| Student B: | ❖ Needed reminders to write quickly and not focus so much on the formation of each letter  
❖ Paused to reread sentence written  
❖ Spent a lot of time erasing words written incorrectly, instead of crossing it out as he was instructed to do  
❖ 32 words written |
| Student C: | ❖ Commented on that the buses looked like out school buses  
❖ Needed a reminder to continue working  
❖ Reread written work at the end of time given  
❖ Wanted more time to finish his writing piece – he did not like that he did not have a finished piece  
❖ Spent a lot of time erasing words written incorrectly, instead of crossing it out as he was instructed to do  
❖ 16 words written |

Total Number of Words Written by the Group: 83 Words
Research Observation Recording Form

Date: December 19, 2012  
Beginning Time: 8:45  
Ending Time: 8:55

Writing Prompt: You visit the zoo with your mother and as you walk past the bear exhibit you notice this young girl and this bear. Why is this girl in the cage with the bear? What is she doing in there with his bear?

Amount of Time Given to Complete the Writing Prompt: 3 minutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Student A: | After 20 seconds of think time, he was excited and ready to write  
Did not write in the lines - a much larger font than usual  
1 full page of writing was completed  
Used very simple language  
Common words were misspelled – wat for with  
Though that the bear was easier to write about than the other prompt  
36 words |
| Student B: | Initially was not sure what to write about – then got an idea  
Started writing right away – needed a prompt to continue thinking before beginning the writing process  
Reminder to not erase just cross out  
Reminder how to count the number of words written  
31 words |
| Student C: | Seemed unengaged in the topic.  
2 prompts needed to remain on task  
Answered in “test language” form – answering the question  
“The school prompt was easier to write about than this one. I did not like this one.”  
16 words |

Total Number of Words Written by the Group: 83 Words
Research Observation Recording Form

Date: January 3, 2013  Beginning Time: 11:40  Ending Time: 12:00

Writing Prompt: Pretend you are a pumpkin on Halloween. What do you see while everyone is trick or treating? How are you feeling? What happens to you as everyone turns off their lights and heads to bed?

Amount of Time Given to Complete the Writing Prompt: 3 minutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Student A: | - Excited to begin this writing  
- “I think about going trick or treating.”  
- Used large font – needed reminder to stay within the lines  
- Only listed ideas – did not use complete sentences  
- 9 words |
| Student B: | - “Hmmm, Oh I have an idea.”  
- Thought that it was harder to write about his topic because he was not actually a pumpkin.  
- Liked the other prompts better  
- 31 words |
| Student C: | - Stated, “Ok, I got my idea.”  
- Enjoyed looking at the graph and knew how many words he needed to write this time.  
- Reminder to use print not cursive  
- Spent a lot of time on his letter formation  
- 14 words |

Total Number of Words Written by the Group: 54 Words
Research Observation Recording Form

Date: January 7, 2013   Beginning Time: 12:08   Ending Time: 12:11

Writing Prompt: **Describe your favorite Christmas gift.**

Amount of Time Given to Complete the Writing Prompt: **3 ½ minutes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Student A: | ❖ Needed reminder to use complete sentences – not just list details  
            ❖ Prompted to talk about what his gift was before beginning – was stuck on what to write about  
            ❖ Stayed within the lines  
            ❖ Wrote for the entire time  
            ❖ He really liked this prompt – stated, “After I thought about it for a minute, it was easy for me to remember my favorite Christmas gift.”  
            ❖ 40 words |
| Student B: | ❖ Talked about what he was going to write about before beginning  
            ❖ Stated how he would start his writing  
            ❖ 33 words |
| Student C: | ❖ Immediately had a story starter and wanted to share with the group – after sharing it with the group, he asked if it was a good way to start his story  
            ❖ Asked for a word so he could spell it correctly  
            ❖ Wrote for the entire time  
            ❖ Thought that this one was easier because you had to just figure out which one was your favorite – it could be anything.  
            ❖ 15 words |

**Total Number of Words Written by the Group:** 88 Words
Research Observation Recording Form

Date: January 8, 2013  
Beginning Time: 12:00  
Ending Time: 12:15

Writing Prompt: Imagine that it rained food for an entire day. What kind of food would fall from the sky? What would you do with all of the food?

Amount of Time Given to Complete the Writing Prompt: 3½ minutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Observations</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Student A: | ❖ Excited about this prompt  
            ❖ Reminded the group to write within the lines  
            ❖ “This makes me hungry.”  
            ❖ Very engaged during the entire time  
            ❖ Asked if he could get additional time to continue writing  
            ❖ 44 words |
| Student B: | ❖ “Hmmm, I think I am going to like this one.”  
            ❖ “Can we have 4 and a half minutes?”  
            ❖ When the timer went off – did not like having to stop writing  
            ❖ Very engaged  
            ❖ 30 words |
| Student C: | ❖ Wanted to share his ideas  
            ❖ Reminded the group that neatness does not matter – just get their ideas down on the paper  
            ❖ Stopped to reread work written  
            ❖ Very engaged  
            ❖ 13 words |

Total Number of Words Written by the Group: 87 Words
Research Observation Recording Form

Date: January 23, 2013  
Beginning Time: 9:55  
Ending Time: 10:05

Writing Prompt: Imagine that you had a dinosaur in your backyard for an entire weekend. What would you weekend be like? What would you do with the dinosaur?

Amount of Time Given to Complete the Writing Prompt: 3 ½ minutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Observations</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Student A: | - Excited about this prompt  
| | - “Ah, I know what I should write about!”  
| | - 37 words |
| Student B: | - Excited about this prompt  
| | - “Hmm, that would be really cool.”  
| | - Made a connection to cave men riding dinosaurs around. He would have his dinosaur use its tail to knock people over – like his brother  
| | - While writing, stated, “this is really funny. You are going to like reading this one.”  
| | - 45 words |
| Student C: | - Wanted to share his ideas – stated, “I would ride my dinosaur around.”  
| | - Knew a great topic sentence that he wanted to share with the group that restated the question  
| | - Made a connection to The Flintstones when the elephant dinosaur uses its nose to give people a shower  
| | - Crossed out misspelled words instead of erasing them  
| | - 16 words |

Total Number of Words Written by the Group: 98 Words
Research Observation Recording Form

Date: January 24, 2013  
Beginning Time: 12:00  
Ending Time: 12:20

Writing Prompt: What do you want to be when you grow up and why?

Amount of Time Given to Complete the Writing Prompt: 4 minutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Observations</th>
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</table>
| Student A: | “I need to make up my mind – I would like to be a doctor, cop or a teacher.”
|          | “I practice being a cop a lot when playing with my brother.”
|          | Used a lot of details within his writing – did not just answer the question
|          | 34 words |
| Student B: | Wants to be a wrestler – stated, “I haven’t really thought about this before.”
|          | Verbally gave a reason that he would want to be a wrestler – so he could be famous
|          | Did not seem as excited about this prompts as others in the past
|          | 38 words |
| Student C: | Wanted to be a race car driver, pumper (pump gas), and own my own restaurant
|          | “I race my brother on my bike and always win.”
|          | Needed some encouragement to keep writing
|          | Wrote with his head down on the table
|          | 23 words |

** After they finished writing – each student read their passage aloud to the group and we check to make sure that correct spelling, capitalization and punctuation was used.

Total Number of Words Written by the Group: 95 Words
Research Observation Recording Form

Date: January 29, 2013  Beginning Time: 11:50  Ending Time: 12:05

Writing Prompt: If you could be anything you wanted to be (animal, person, object, ect.), what would you be?

Amount of Time Given to Complete the Writing Prompt: 4 minutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Observations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student A:</td>
<td>“I would want to be a cheetah, so I could run really fast.”</td>
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<td>With prompting, added details during discussion – “I could run after food, run to school, and be really fast in school.”</td>
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<td>Asked me what would I want to be and why</td>
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<td>50 words</td>
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<td>Student B:</td>
<td>Stated that he would want to be a human, so he could learn more.</td>
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<td>He would learn how to get good grades in college and master his math facts</td>
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<td>Shared with the group how he was going to start his writing piece – “I would like to be a …”</td>
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<td>57 words</td>
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<td>Student C:</td>
<td>Quickly turned to the pg and started reading the passage aloud to the group.</td>
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<td>Stated that he would like to be a car – “I really like great cars. I would drive all over the world.”</td>
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<td>28 words</td>
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** After they finished writing – each student read their passage aloud to the group and we check to make sure that correct spelling, capitalization and punctuation was used.

Total Number of Words Written by the Group: 135 Words
Research Observation Recording Form

Date: January 30, 2013  
Beginning Time: 12:10  
Ending Time: 12:25

Writing Prompt: Imagine that your teacher turned into an animal. What type of animal would she be? Would she act differently? If so, how would she act? What type of homework would she give?

Amount of Time Given to Complete the Writing Prompt: 4 minutes

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<tr>
<th>Students</th>
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</table>
| Student A: | ✓ Very excited to write about me.  
✓ “I would want you to be a worm, so you would eat all of our homework.”  
✓ Needed a great deal of assistance at the end to correct spelling – very difficult to read  
✓ Stopped to think about what to write next during the timed session  
✓ Thought that this prompt was harder – “I had to think more.”  
✓ Wrote about myself as well as what animal my co-teacher would be as well.  
✓ 29 words |
| Student B | ✓ “Hmmm, I’m not sure.” Other students gave suggestions – bird, butterfly, etc.”  
✓ Thought that this prompt was harder too – “I don’t think of you as an animal, it was hard.”  
✓ 61 words |
| Student C: | ✓ Wanted more think time – “Can I talk about my ideas before we get started?”  
✓ Thought that I would be a dolphin  
✓ During the timed session, wanted the correct spelling of dolphin and wouldn’t move on until he had it  
✓ After we counted the number of words written – told the group – “We went down this time. Oh man, maybe next time we will go out.”  
✓ 21 words |

** After they finished writing – each student read their passage aloud to the group and we check to make sure that correct spelling, capitalization and punctuation was used.  
** As soon as we returned back to class, he quickly went up to my co-teacher to tell her how many words they wrote this time. They all told her what animal they would want us to be.

Total Number of Words Written by the Group: 111 Words
Research Observation Recording Form

Date: February 6, 2013  Beginning Time: 9:10  Ending Time: 9:25

Writing Prompt: By the end of third grade what is one thing you would like to improve upon. Why?

Amount of Time Given to Complete the Writing Prompt: 4 ½ minutes

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student A:</td>
<td>Needed a lot of prompting to assist in developing his first sentence</td>
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<td>Had to actually underline the part of the question he would use</td>
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<td>Wanted help spelling “writing” correctly – would not move on unless he had it spelled correctly</td>
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<td>During the timed session, was stuck and was not sure what to write about</td>
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<td>“This one was not as much fun.”</td>
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<td>Visibly happy when the timer went off</td>
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<td>31 words</td>
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</table>

| Student B: | “I would like to improve my writing.” |
|           | Went back to other writing to see what he would like to improve upon – stated, “I would like to make my punctuation better, add more details and make it more organized.” |
|           | 57 words |

| Student C: | Wanted to improve upon his reading |
|           | Able to give many examples as to what in reading he would like to improve upon verbally |
|           | Stated how he would start his writing |
|           | Very proud of his handwriting – noting that it was neat but he didn’t spend too much time on it |
|           | Perfect introduction to his writing – restated the prompt given |
|           | Gave a perfect 1st detail to his writing as well |
|           | Enjoyed this prompt – asked if he could have more time to write |
|           | 27 words |

** After they finished writing – each student read their passage aloud to the group and we check to make sure that correct spelling, capitalization and punctuation was used.

Total Number of Words Written by the Group: 115 Words
**Research Observation Recording Form**

Date: **February 8, 2013**  
Beginning Time: **10:50**  
Ending Time: **9:25**

**Visual Aid Removed**

Writing Prompt: Imagine that you could have anything you wanted for lunch. What would your school lunch look like? What would you different foods be? Would you make the lunch menu the same for each day?

Amount of Time Given to Complete the Writing Prompt: **4 ½ minutes**

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<th>Students</th>
<th>Observations</th>
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| **Student A:** | - Was excited about this prompt  
- Needed 1 minute of think time before we began our discussion about what we would write about  
- Stated that he would have a candy lunch – needed reminders to add details. “What kind of candy? Would it change every day?”  
- 53 words |
| **Student B:** | - Needed some time to think about what he wanted to write  
- Stated that he was not sure at first  
- “Hmm, I would have steak.” Needed prompts to add details – “What else would you have with your steak?”  
- While writing – read the words he was going to write aloud before writing them down on the paper.  
- 55 words |
| **Student C:** | - Immediately got a smile on his face and said, “yum.”  
- After I repeated the question to him, he stated that he would change the menu to French toast sticks, eggs, the circle sausage and chocolate milk. Also stated that he would serve them every day.  
- Asked if this prompt would be a good one to use, “If I could change the school lunch, I would change it to….”  
- Asked for the correct spelling of French.  
- After the topic sentence – stated that he was finished. Prompt needed to add details to his writing, such as “would you eat that every day or something different each day?”  
- 27 words |

**After they finished writing – each student read their passage aloud to the group and we check to make sure that correct spelling, capitalization and punctuation was used.**

**Total Number of Words Written by the Group:** **135 Words**
Research Observation Recording Form

Date: **February 11, 2013**   Beginning Time: **9:10**   Ending Time: **9:25**

** Visual Aid Removed

Writing Prompt: Imagine that you were the principal of our school, what would you change about the school? What would change the time that we were in school? Would you change the amount of time that we were in specials? Would you change our lunches? How would your school be different than ours now?

Amount of Time Given to Complete the Writing Prompt: **5 minutes**

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<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Observations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student A:</td>
<td>“I would change it so we would only come to school for 1 day.”&lt;br&gt;Needed a little prompting to give his best effort – thought that this prompt was not at fun and didn’t want to do it.&lt;br&gt;Wanted the spelling of “different”&lt;br&gt;Was the most well written one by far – he had a introductory sentence and details that were organized&lt;br&gt;33 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student B:</td>
<td>“I have to write more than fifty-five words to beat my goal.” “To beat our group goal, we need to write more than 125 words.”&lt;br&gt;“I would change goal, we need to write more than an hour.”&lt;br&gt;Added on to another student’s idea – “Well if we were only in school for 1 day we would have to be in school for like 10 hours that day.”&lt;br&gt;When the timer went off – did not like having to stop writing&lt;br&gt;Very engaged&lt;br&gt;76 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student C:</td>
<td>Stated, “This one is easy, I have a lot of things ideas.”&lt;br&gt;Wanted to give the group ideas as to how to write the topic sentence&lt;br&gt;Asked for the spelling of change – prompt to look back to the question given&lt;br&gt;“If only I had a little more time, I would have met my goal.”&lt;br&gt;25 words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** After they finished writing – each student read their passage aloud to the group and we check to make sure that correct spelling, capitalization and punctuation was used.

**Total Number of Words Written by the Group:** 134 Words
Research Observation Recording Form

Date: February 12, 2013  
Beginning Time: 9:10  
Ending Time: 9:25

** Visual Aid Removed

Writing Prompt: Imagine that you were given 1 million dollars. What would you do with all of that money? Would you buy gifts for your family members or go on a vacation? What would you buy? Where would you go?

Amount of Time Given to Complete the Writing Prompt: 5 minutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Student A: | Verbally responded no to the question – would you buy gifts for your family?  
“I would go on vacation. I would go on a big ship. My family would go with me.”  
Asked the group what the sentence starter would be for this prompt.  
“No, wait. I would give people money to move out of their houses so my whole family could live on the same road. It would be my family road.”  
37 words |
| Student B: | “I would go to Florida. I would buy a hotel room, eat fancy food, and go to Disney World and Lego Land.”  
Stated that he would bring his whole family too.  
Midway through his writing – he changed his writing from talking about himself having a million dollars to encouraging someone to go to Florida if they had enough money. Gave additional time to correct this misunderstanding.  
74 words |
| Student C: | “I would buy my own building and buy everything in the snack bar. I would also buy 100 computers. I would use all of the computers for everyone in my whole family.”  
Gave the sentence starter for the group.  
Asked for the correctly spelling of several words.  
With 1 minute left, stated that he was finished. Needed prompting to continue writing.  
30 words |

** After they finished writing – each student read their passage aloud to the group and we check to make sure that correct spelling, capitalization and punctuation was used.

Total Number of Words Written by the Group: 141 Words